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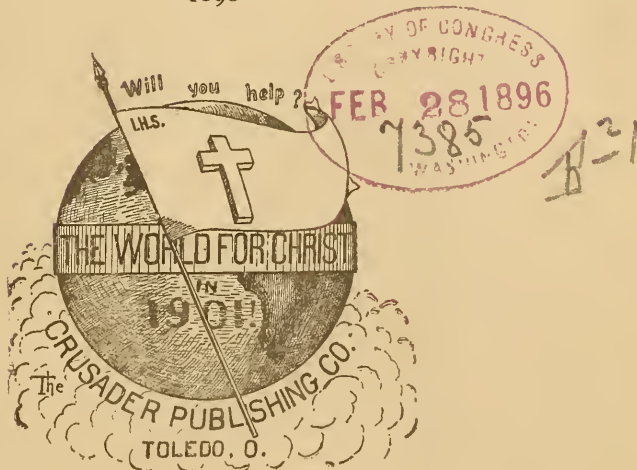
The Five Redemption Years

A Blade o' Grass

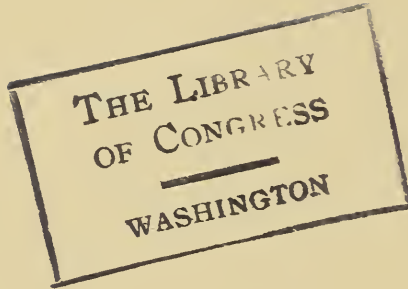
W. H. Bishop
BY W. H. BISHOP

Author of "THE GARDEN OF EDEN, U. S. A.," etc., etc.

1896



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1896, AND THE FIVE REDEMPTION YEARS.

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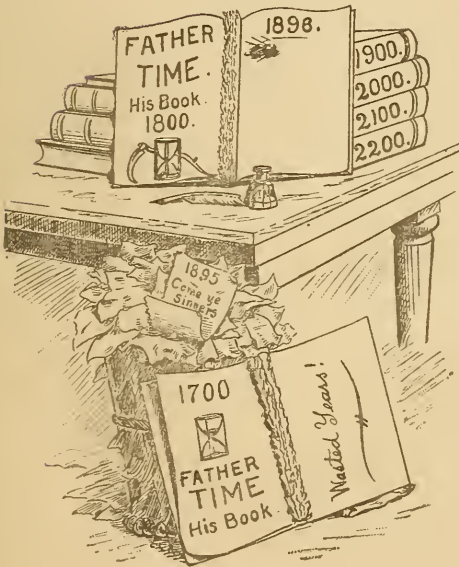
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1896,

AND

The Five Redemption Years.

BOOK I. THE WASTED CENTURIES.



Whose Fault?

Is it the fault of God, or of the Christian church, that the world is not saved?

Possibly it is a bold question, and yet in a search for the causes which underlie the present moral condition of the world, it is a question that can fairly be asked, and an honest answer demanded. Nearly two millenniums have passed since Christ came upon the earth to re-

deem it, and since he gave into the hands of his disciples the work of converting men to the truth, and making it possible for God to save them. After all these lagging cen-

turies the world is not saved, not even our own country, which we are accustomed to call the most enlightened one upon the face of the earth. Whose fault is it that it is not?

Christian men, even in these more enlightened times, have been wont to hide behind the letter of the Scripture, and to declare that they are not at fault. God, in his infinite wisdom, has not seen fit to save the world; or sinners, in the hardness of their hearts, have refused to be converted. God has not even inspired his disciples to work more diligently for the world's salvation. As the inspiration for every good work must come from God, Christian people are not to blame for the unsatisfactory moral condition of mankind. Inferentially and theologically it is God who is at fault. The Christian church goes scot free of blame!

The Word of God declares that it has pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe. If we ignore the less positive teaching of the Scriptures upon this point, and make this text our Bible as far as this one point is concerned, it would seem that preaching is the only duly accredited means of saving the world. At least in apparent fidelity to this idea, the church has magnified the office of the preacher of the gospel until he stands almost alone as the human instrument of salvation in the modern church. He alone is considered the evangelist of the gospel of Christ, and in every village and hamlet in civilized countries there has been a pulpit erected for him, and our missionaries also occupy every point of vantage in heathen lands. Surely it would seem that the divine commission had been fulfilled. We have preached the gospel continually and are still preaching, preaching, preaching; and yet the world is not saved. People will not even come into our churches and sit in the cushioned pews we have provided for them. We have certainly fulfilled the demands of the law, since the gospel is preached everywhere. What more is needed? Why is the world not saved?

The Bible specifically makes faith the basis of salvation, and also teaches that the prayer of faith is duly answered. The church, reading the letter of the law in this respect, also, has established prayer-meeting rooms in connection with every place of worship, and its membership is diligently exhorted to have greater faith in God, and in his power to save mankind from its sins. We have prayed times without number that the world might be saved, and that the church might receive a greater baptism of the Holy Spirit, and thus be better able to lead men to the Savior, but our prayers have not been answered. We have prayed diligently, and we have also paid for the preaching of the gospel in our churches, but still the world is not saved. What more can be lacking?

A hundred years ago it was discovered that the pulpit was not well adapted to the work of preaching the gospel to children, and for this reason Sunday schools were established. This special work for the children has been carried forward until to-day every church organization has its Sunday school, where for one hour each week the children who care to attend are taught and catechized. We have not only allowed the children to come to Christ, but we have made the way easy. But still the world is not saved. Out of twenty young men growing up to manhood in our communities, and about to take the destinies of the world in their hands, only one listens to the preaching of the gospel and is saved. The other nineteen, if they are ever in the Sunday school at all, drift out of it unsaved, and many of them leave it for the saloon or a life upon the street. We have preached, we have prayed, and, in addition to all this, we have catechized the children. Is not our duty much more than done? What more can reasonably be expected of us? Is it our fault that the world is not saved?

Orthodox Heresy.

There is no heresy like that which disguises itself in the garb of truth and steals the letter of the Scripture to bolster up doctrines which are in contravention with common sense, and clearly opposed to the teaching of human experience. For there are three revelations from Heaven, not one, only, and these three are one in fact, for they are each written by God's own hand. These three books of revelation are the Bible, the Book of Nature, and the Book of Human Experience. One alone, even though it may be the Bible itself, may not give us a full conception of the truth, but where all agree upon any one point we may be very sure that in that particular we have the clearly revealed will of God.

The Book of Nature makes it evident to us that our God is not a wizard, as some of us were taught in our infancy to believe, speaking worlds into existence with a breath, and ruling the world by haphazard decrees. He is rather the Wise Architect, working in accordance with well established laws which he has ordained, and to which he is himself subject. A careful study of the Book of Nature has not only taught us this, but it has also given us broader and more reasonable ideas of the Creator of the universe and a deeper insight into his character and into his work. He is a wonder-working God, surely, but his wonders are the product of wise and marvelous laws, not of jugglery or caprice.

The Book of Human Experience, equally with the Book of Nature, is an interpreter of the Bible, and its plain teachings cannot be ignored. Doctrines which find no warrant in human experience, and which conflict with the reason which God has given to us, are clearly the work of men and not of God. The letter of the Scripture may sometimes be misleading, but there is no reason why we should stumble and blunder in seeking for a plain interpretation of its spirit. That is clear enough to one who takes the Bible as a whole and who reads it without prejudice. God works through material

and human agencies, and it has pleased him, instead of making a race of automaton Christians, to make men free to choose, and yet to place before them the broadest opportunities and the highest possibilities. That he does leave them free to choose seems to be the clear teaching of human experience. Men are not slaves or puppets, even of the infinite God.

We may be saved both morally and spiritually, we may make our lives noble and sublime, we may conquer the material universe and may even grasp the lightning and tame it to our purposes, we may also take into our hearts the very spirit of God, catching the breath of Heaven to sweeten and beautify our lives and broaden our characters, and thereby to become the very sons of God himself, but we are not compelled to do any of these things. We may lie down with the brutes, and in our self-imposed moral imbecility bleat our profane defiance into God's face, becoming degenerate sons of a degenerate race, animals by choice when the destiny of becoming sons of God is offered to us. It is for us to choose between these two destinies. The opportunity and the decision plainly lie within our reach, and while Heaven may prompt us to choose wisely, we may disregard that prompting without Heaven being at fault. Neither have we any reason to wait for a miracle which shall compel us to make a wise choice. In this God has honored us more than he has honored the angels in Heaven. We are kings of our own destiny, arbiters of our own eternal happiness or misery. The earth and Heaven are ours if we will accept of them, but we must definitely choose the gift and make it ours. Not even God will compel our choice or our obedience.

Neither is the church compelled by the overmastering power of God to be true to its Heavenly appointed mission or to its opportunities. It has the power to redeem this world and save it from its sins and miseries if it will. Under

God and by the help of the Holy Spirit it can make this earth a paradise, not in some far distant century, but in this one. It can reach out into the homes and the hearts of the people and win them for Christ and for the better destiny. It can rescue young men from the overmastering temptations that assail them, from lives of brutal passion, from self-indulgence and moral indifference, and can make them men in the fullest and best sense of the word. All this can be accomplished by the use of means that are ready at hand and of easy application, if Christian people will only think. There is no need whatever for us to wait for miracles before these things can be done. The power is clearly within ourselves, supplemented as it will be if we will only accept it, and not be satisfied by simply asking for it, by the infinite power of Heaven.

Upon the other hand, the church can lie down in criminal imbecility before every opportunity and every puzzling problem, vainly calling upon God to do its thinking and to perform its duties for it; it can be recreant to every charge and trust and to every principle of patriotism, of loyalty to God and to humanity, and it can say if it will, that it is not at fault because God in his infinite wisdom has not seen fit to save the world. The world belongs to the church and the rewards of both earth and Heaven are in its gift, but it must choose its destiny and accept the work connected with its mission, or else weakly allow the work to go undone. Miracles will be wrought in its behalf if they are necessary, but they will not be wrought until the church has done its full duty and exhausted every human means in the accomplishment of its purposes. The world will not be saved by any hocus pocus process, no matter how diligently the church may pray to be relieved of any thought or trouble in the matter. Effect will invariably follow cause, and miracles do not grow out of sloth and moral indifference. It is for the church to set in motion the controlling causes

which shall reach and save every human being within the field of its influence. It has no right to wait until Heaven shall have done these things in its stead. This is also the clear teaching of human experience. This is the effective preaching of the gospel and the discipling of all men which Christ imposed upon his disciples and left to them as their sacred mission. This is the Christian service which the church owes to the world and which should have been performed centuries ago.

God may yet save the world by a miracle of grace, but it will not be until the instrument he has chosen for that work and has so greatly honored, has been broken and cast aside as useless. He will not forever wait upon an indolent church. This is the destiny which the Christian church is asking for when it prays so earnestly that God will convert the world by a miraculous display of his power, and when it ignores and wilfully puts aside the wonderful opportunities that are already before it. The church is asking that it may be set aside from the highest mission and the most glorious destiny that was ever given to mankind, the work of uplifting and upbuilding humanity and saving it, not by heedless prayers, not by miracles from Heaven, but by the indomitable will and persistent energy of living sons of a living God. Christian men are asking that God shall set them aside and shall find some other means for the accomplishment of his purposes for mankind, and leave them to lazily dream of a Heaven they have neither revealed to others nor earned for themselves.

The teaching of human experience and the spirit of Bible truth clearly teaches us that the work of the church is not to rehearse the words of the gospel of salvation in our churches, simply, leaving men to listen to it or not as they may choose, but to preach it effectively; not to wait until the platitudes of modern sermonizing shall touch the hearts of men and convert them to the truth, but to actually reach

men with the Christian influence and by the power of human sympathy and in the name of a holy cause, persuade them to become willing disciples of the Son of God. Turning men to God is a human work and it is useless for us to pray to be relieved of it by the interposition of the Holy Spirit. Whatever the influence of the Spirit of God may be, it clearly does not trench upon or limit the field of human influence and effort. But saving men is God's work and with this we cannot meddle. Salvation is something that each man must settle with God for himself alone.

The fact that the church has thus far signally failed in this work of bringing the world to Christ, needs no proof or illustration. The world is not saved, nor is it likely to be as long as present methods and standards of success are accepted as sufficient. Not one hamlet or village the wide world over has yet been reported as being wholly converted to Christianity, and its people living in full and complete submission to the will of God. The proportion of nominal Christians, even in our own enlightened land, is small, and of these how many are really disciples of the unselfish, humanity-serving Christ, only God can tell. The dull routine of our church services goes on forever, but men die in their sins and in their misery, unsought and uncared for. While Christians pray, millions upon millions of human beings go down to death and to moral degradation unsaved, and few Christian men or ministers seem to greatly care; at least no more positive and direct means than those which have failed over and over again, are instituted to influence men and to save them from this fate. If they wish to be saved, if they will listen to the spoken gospel and accept it, the doors of the church are open to them; but if they do not, it does not seem to greatly matter to Christian people. They are allowed to go their own way, unsought and well nigh forgotten. And with them go the young manhood of the race, while millions of children, blindly following in the

footsteps of the young men, are lost to the gentler and nobler influences with which a true Christianity should surround them. The never-ending round of evil influence goes on unchecked. The man is unsought and the child who follows in his footsteps is not saved. The child is lost, and through him, the world itself is lost.

If our modern, duty-shirking and very comfortable theology is true and it is God's fault that the world is not saved, why should Christian men and women greatly care whether men die in their sins or not? If it is God's business to save men let us wait until he saves them, but if he does not, we will still go on in our indolent, heedless way, dreaming of Heavenly bliss for ourselves, however little has been our Christian influence upon the lives of others, declaring, by our actions if not by words, that we are not at fault, but that it is the fault of an omnipotent God that the world is not saved!

Ministers and Christian Progress.



The ministers of the gospel are perhaps not wholly to blame for this lack of success in Christian evangelism, and yet it must be remembered that they are the natural leaders in Christian progress, and an educated ministry in this progressive age of the world should long ere this have broken away from the shackles of tradition and of churchly customs, and have found some more effective method of reach-

ing the hearts of men than by the eternal talk, talk, talk of modern sermonizing. If words could have saved the world it would have been saved centuries ago. If men could be reached and won by rehearsing the platitudes of the spoken gospel in their hearing some means would have been found ere this for compelling the last recalcitrant sinner to listen. But these means have signally failed to convert the world to Christianity. They failed in the time of Christ, they fail still more notably now. If all we learn from Christ's example and teaching is to talk about religion, even with the eloquence and spiritual power of the Son of God himself, his mission on earth was a failure. The world will never be won by talk alone. The one who thinks that it will be is a miserably poor student of human affairs, and he is only wasting his breath to little purpose. If the Son of God could not win men by talk alone, surely the modern minister, be he ever so eloquent, can hope for no greater success.

Neither will the world be won by prayer, despite the beautiful but indolence-breeding theology we have formulated concerning the all sufficiency of prayer and faith. God has made Christian men and women the ministers of his salvation to their fellow men, and until this plan of saving and redeeming humanity through human agencies, rather than by angelic influences, has been discarded and set aside, he will not take the work out of the hands of the church and do it himself, no matter how diligently Christian people may pray for a miraculous world redemption. The faith of an earnest Christian disciple who is using every faculty that God has given him in an honest effort to reach and influence those about him, will enable him to remove mountains of difficulty from his path, but the faith of a Christian sluggard who is hoping to be carried to the skies upon flowery beds of ease, while the world is being converted by miraculous means, will not tip over a molehill. God cannot be made the scapegoat of our sins. The duty of a Christian disciple cannot be done in a prayer-meeting room in the intervals of shaking hands in a social way with congenial friends. God is not mocked by the everlasting flow of our words, or by a social in which the exercises are of a religious character and consist in prayer and in the telling of "experiences," not upon the battlefield, but in doing nothing at all. If Christian people have no better service than this to offer God, better far that the mouth of every professing Christian were sealed and the world spared the spectacle of a church lazily praying week in and week out, without a single one of their prayers being answered. The world is not convinced of the truth of our religion by such a spectacle as this. Words will not save the world, neither will they deceive God.

The era of talk is at an end, whether we will it so or not. The era of well directed action is already here. The business men of the world have set the pace. If the leaders

in Christian thought and action cannot keep step with it, they must stand aside and allow some new agency to be discovered which will save humanity and give to mankind the glorious destiny that is in store for it. It may be largely a material salvation that shall grow out of the present broadening influences in human thought and action, if the church fails to accept the plain lessons of the times and profit by them, but for this the church itself will be largely to blame. It has had its opportunity, it has it even now if it will bestir itself and learn Christianity as the world already understands it, but to-morrow it may be set aside and the progress of the world sweep past it and beyond it.

The church is to-day an impotent church before the many world problems which confront it. It has no answer ready for any one of them, not even those within the limits of its own particular province. It is bound so firmly to its traditions and customs that it has apparently lost the power to meet the changing conditions of the times or to move forward with the world about it. The old religious chestnut, "How shall we reach the masses of the people?" is as far from a solution to-day as it was fifty years ago. The problem is unsolved because no one cares whether it is solved or not. It is much easier to go on with the old, humdrum, last century methods than to seek for new ones or to apply them when they are found. God will save the world in his own good time. Why should Christian ministers or laymen bother themselves to help him in the work?

Why should not the church learn these plain lessons from its past experience and from its defeat, and in these closing years of a misspent century enter at once and vigorously into a holy crusade for the real and logical salvation of mankind? Why should it continue to cling so desperately to its illogical traditions and to a theology which leaves a world in sin and then charges upon God the results of its own neglect? Why should it not enlist the parents in a determined

effort to save at least the children of the land from the soul-deadening influences which surround them? Why should it not enter into the home and the social life of the people, and by its wise leadership and kindly counsel, show that its interest in humanity is not a mere proselyting interest which ceases when a convert has been made? Why should it not make these few remaining years of the century the redemption years of the sad ones that are past, and close the century with a land redeemed and a manhood that is a glorious realization of completeness, Godward and manward, instead of the self-seeking, self-indulgent manhood which finds its types within the church, as well as upon the outside? Why should it not prove by its energy and determination that it is the living church of a living Christ, and not simply the lifeless representative of a dead creed which has no power to stir the heart or even to greatly change the character? Will the church live, and living redeem the world, or will it die as it deserves to die, if it cannot measure its zeal and devotion against the many moral and spiritual problems of humanity and at least try to solve them? Is obedience to God and love for humanity really dead in the world?

Not the Letter, but the Spirit.

As well might a minister sit upon a fireless locomotive and seek to propel it and the loaded train behind it by blowing against the smokestack, as to hope to move the world by words that do not spring from the very spirit of action. Thought transformed into action gives us the keynote of success; but thought alone, and dead thought of dead men at that, can only lead to failure. The locomotive in which the mechanical spirit of action can quickly be evoked, and which can transform the iron mechanism into a living thing, should teach the religious world a lesson. It

has been invented within the present century, and already it has transformed the world of commerce and of industry; and now, even before the century closes, the business world is busily engaged in harnessing the lightning to its chariot wheels of progress, while men stand still and wonder what miracle will next be wrought. The motive force of well directed action has moved the world, and is moving it again and again. There is no disheartening failure here, for means are carefully adapted to the ends sought for, and men are determined that they will succeed. The spirit of action has entered into men's lives and set their souls on fire, and this is the logical result. The world is transformed and made the better and the brighter because of it.

But the church of a living Christ, unable to catch the spirit of the age, or to plan conquests for itself, is still in the wind era of its development. Because it will not think or act it is engaged in a task more hopeless than that of trying to move loaded trains by the human breath. Amid the transformations of a century of progress it stands unmoved, still seeking to convert the world to its religious belief with lifeless words. The words win some lifeless converts, it is true, but the fire of enthusiasm, the energy of a consecrated purpose and a determination that will not be conquered, is sadly lacking. The spirit of action is wanting, a flame has not been kindled in men's souls, and the words are but the reverberations of the idle wind in the tomb-like stillness of our lifeless hearts. Our hearts and souls are dead and apparently immovable. Is the church dead also? Can we hope for no resurrection fire that will enter into the Christian hosts and lead them forward to an immediate conquest of the world? Must we still wait hundreds and perhaps thousands of years for the world to be redeemed?

The spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be conveyed in words. That must run from heart to heart, and if

the spirit is lacking the words by which we seek to convey it are barren nothingness, and had better have been left unsaid. They may reach the ears of thousands, but if they fail to reach the heart, and there discharge their Heaven-born freightage of truth and of enthusiasm, their mission has failed. Either the heart of the speaker or the heart of the listener is dead. If both hearts are dead and devoid of the spirit of action, if Christianity is to each but an empty aspiration or a society fad, barren indeed are the sounding words that pass between them. If they cannot stir the heart of the speaker himself to activity, how can they be expected to transform the world of human life and action?

If the spirit of active love, of unselfish devotion, and of a holy enthusiasm is in the hearts of Christian people as fire and the Heaven-born power of steam is in the modern locomotive, if it has force enough to quicken the thought, and to impel to well considered action in behalf of their fellow men, it will surely reach other hearts with its message of God-love and of human sympathy, and it cannot fail of having its due effect. But if hearts are dead to human need and to God's call to self-denying service, then our religion is vain, even though the emotions be greatly quickened, and earnest prayers for humanity's welfare arise in every church. If our religion is simply the froth of emotion and of aspiration, if Christian enthusiasm is expended in simply bombarding Heaven with senseless prayers, if we cannot be spurred or driven into earnest and honest service for God and for humanity, then the words of our religion are dead and barren words, and they will echo and re-echo from closed hearts and barricaded ears as they do from plaster walls. The letter killeth; it is the spirit that giveth life. Action begets action, but sound only excites our wonder until we have investigated the cause, and then it is powerless even to arouse our fears.

Is the active spirit of the gospel of salvation abroad in

our churches to-day? Is our love for humanity a real heart passion that impels us to both plan and to work for humanity's welfare? Do we really love our uninteresting and unfortunate fellow beings to the extent of a Christ-like self-denial in their behalf? Or is our interest in our fellow men beyond our particular denomination or clique, a mere proselyting interest, a desire to see them benefited and saved if Heaven will only save them without trouble or expense to ourselves? Are our churches really more than religious clubs where we congregate upon the Sabbath to touch elbows with friends and acquaintances and to listen to the best preaching we are able to pay for? Is not the extent of our love for humanity a mere denominational zeal and only an instance of a little broader selfishness than that which binds us to our own families or to our well loved friends? Are we Christians in any broad and adequate sense of the word, or is our Christianity only a name, a fruitless aspiration, an unintentional pretense? Let the Christian people of the land themselves answer, and lest any may think that this criticism is for the church alone, let those who are not Christians show wherein their relations with God and with man are more logical and consistent than those of the people of God. The hypocrisy of self-righteousness is more likely to be outside of the church than in it. The church may be mistaken and blunder along in a dense atmosphere of an erroneous tradition; the people of the world, standing outside of this atmosphere and reading the Bible clearer than do Christian people themselves, are often willfully blind.

And yet if our modern Christianity is no more than these things that have been enumerated there is no reason why we should ask those outside of the church to accept it. Their heart relations with their God and with his Son, Jesus Christ, are their own concern. The church has no part or interest in them. It has abdicated its position as a

minister of salvation between God and men. But if our Christianity is more than these things, if we are living disciples of a living Christ, if we are willing to sacrifice our selfish interests in the broad interests of humanity, if we really love God enough to be willing to obey him and actually carry the gospel of a salvation that is material and concrete as well as spiritual and remote, to those within the sphere of our influence, then it is full time that we should prove all this and show to the world that our mission is divine and that God speaks through us to needy and sinful men. If we cannot do this then the mission of the church is ended, and the sooner some more effectual means are discovered for introducing the real Christian spirit of brotherhood into the world, for equalizing the burdens of mankind, and for saving our children from the many temptations that too successfully assail them, the better it will be for us and for the world in which we live, but sadly fail to influence. We cannot forever deceive an awakening humanity with our empty words, or defy God and frustrate his purposes for mankind with our indolent pretense of Christian service.

In proving our Christianity true and one that is adequate to the real needs of the world, we shall also quickly bring to our own communities and to the world at large the millennial radiance of a perfect social and spiritual condition of human life. For the millennial era of the world's history dawns the very day that the church of Christ asks for it in sincerity and is willing to accept it in all its beauty and grandeur. The true spirit of Christian brotherhood, the spirit which prompts us to think of our neighbors as we do of ourselves, and if they lack wisdom, or opportunity, or material comfort, to share with them until they shall have a fair if not an equal chance in the battle of life, can no more be confined within set limits than the sunlight of the physical universe can be boxed up and kept within our churches. We are not devils incapable of reformation, but human

beings with the well-springs of human sympathy already bubbling and surging within our hearts, waiting for the fire of Christian activity to bring it forth. The church is blind that it cannot see this. The world will quickly recognize and accept our Christianity when we have proven it to be a living reality and not a dry formality, a dead bundle of aspirations, a hollow mockery built of tinkling words.

Will the Christian church do this? Dare it do anything else and still claim to be the church of a living Christ, the medium through which the love of God can flow into and redeem the hearts of men?

Blind Leaders of the Blind.

We have all been blind leaders of the blind because we have allowed the people of past ages to do our thinking for us and have not even attempted to adapt our religion to the changing exigencies of the times, or to adopt new methods or customs. The tinkling words of our religion have penetrated to our ears; they have even stirred our emotions, but they have apparently not even yet reached our intellects or transformed our hearts. We have made our Bible a fetich to swear by, not an inspiration to noble Christian service and to a conquest of the world. It has been chained as firmly to the traditions and the interpretations of the past as it ever was to the lecterns of the monasteries. We have taught for the spirit of the gospel of salvation simply the traditions of men; and for those who have dared to break away from these and to plead for a reasonable gospel, we have reserved the fiercest anathemas of the church. We have led people to the cross of an unselfish, humanity-serving Christ and have there turned them adrift to learn from our example and from their own experience what Christianity is not. They have become religious as we ourselves are religious, but they have forgotten their fellow men. They

pray for the salvation of the world and for the salvation of their own children; but the very streets have become universities of sin and crime. Penitentiaries exist because religious people have left so very many souls unsought and uncared for. The friendless tramp is simply a forgotten soul wandering up and down the world in search of a human refuge and finding none. The church furnaces might warm his body if the cellar-way were open, but cold indeed would be his welcome if he sought for human sympathy in the audience room of the church itself. The man-judged and society-condemned criminal is only a lost soul who bears about with him the deeper damnation of our neglect. The punishment is his but the curse is ours, and God's church will surely be compelled to answer in the judgment day for its neglect of him and of his kind. It might have saved him as a little child, but it would not.

The religion of letting people alone has only given Satan the better chance of marshalling his cohorts and of keeping his ranks full. The waifs of the street, the children whose parents do not send them to Sabbath school, or who come but soon drift out again because the church is so very accommodating and supinely easy in its methods, only go to swell the ranks of those who know no God, but self, and who care for no salvation but that which spares them from some portion of their daily toil, or ministers to their self-indulgence. The very saloon keepers laugh in their sleeves at the beaten track which leads from the Sunday school room to the saloon, while Christian people, ignoring the fountains of influence and their golden opportunity to prevent the training of innocent children into drunkards, loudly denounce intemperance, and wonder why God does not destroy the traffic in drink. The neglect of the church feeds every hellish traffic, and leaves the soul traps of humanity, the places where children and young people stumble and fall, unguarded and forgotten. The world is

damned because the church of Christ is drunk with an emotional religion and forgets all about humanity and its duty to the childhood of the race. Who saves the children and keeps them pure saves the world; and yet the world of human life is lost thrice over in every century. For no one thinks!

Can we ever learn the lesson of the years, or must we blunder on in our selfish search for the theologian's heaven, while the world is left to Satan and to the laughing human devils who do not even fear the influence of the church? Is God impotent, or are his children fools?

Is there no need for Christian reformation within the church? Is it the world that needs salvation, or must we search for the first converts of the millennial church in our theological colleges, our pulpits, and in our prayer-meeting rooms? Can the church stand before the judgment bar of public opinion, or even of its own conscience, and claim that it is not at fault, that it is fulfilling its mission even in the smallest particular, or that a tithe of its duty is being done? Is there really a church that is worthy of the name of Christ in the world to-day? Is there a single earnest Christian disciple whose soul is really on fire with the enthusiasm of the love of Christ for humanity, and who is ready to move forward to the conquest of the world?

Let no one think that Christianity is being assailed in these plain words. Religious systems may be but Christianity is not. There is a God in Heaven, and the Revelation he has given to man is true in every particular. But he who reads the words alone and proceeds to build his theology upon them, who scissors the Word of God until it suits his notion and who discards or ignores whatever conflicts with the man-wrought structure he has erected, misses entirely the spirit of God's revelation to men, and the great underlying truths that teach God-love and an honest human sympathy. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of

man is a great and living truth, and not a tinkling harmony of words. Like many another truth of Scripture it is a dual truth that is one and inseparable. We prove our love for God by our love for humanity, and we can prove it in no other way. Professions count for nothing when we stand before God or before the world and are called upon to prove that our love and faith is not a vain pretense. The spirit of the love of Christ cannot be formulated into words.

When God asks for our service he does not throw humanity overboard and take church attendance and our empty praises, as some vain, flattery-filled human prince might do, in the place of honest work for the redemption of mankind. The one who sits in his cushioned pew and mourns over his fallen brother while that brother goes down to Hell unsought and unremembered except in prayer, the one who, while he praises God, leaves the pitfalls into which his brother has fallen unguarded in the interest of the children who may innocently follow in that brother's footsteps, is not a Christian, and all the church records in Christendom cannot make him one. He is blindly at fault, perhaps, he is following standards of thought and action which he supposes are correct since they bear the seal of the church and the earmarks of established usage, but he is clearly not a faithful disciple of the lowly Nazarene who went about the highways and byways of Judea and Galilee, seeking lost men and teaching them the principles of a religion that needed no excuse or apology. True Christianity is more than a sentiment, it is more than a barren aspiration, it is far more than any profession. It is Christ-like love and the enthusiasm of the crusaders expressed in well considered and well directed action, and not in empty sounding words. Words? What are words when a world is to be redeemed?

A Modified Bible.

Anyone, be he theologian or fanatic, can make a Bible to his notion by the aid of a paste pot and a pair of scissors, but after all his Bible will be a mere book of words. The revelation of God is not in the printed words gathered here and there to make a dogma or an excuse for inaction, but in the spirit of truth which the words contain, and, perhaps, because they are only words, too dimly reveal. We cannot clip and pare the Word of God and still leave it true, and yet this is what people do when they choose a portion of the Bible to build their theology upon and ignore the rest. If what St. Paul says is true the teachings of St. James and St. John are equally true, and these declare that honest service and a manifest love for one's fellow men are essential elements of the Christian profession.

A dead faith is of no more value to a Christian soldier upon the battleground of humanity's future, than would be a dead horse to a crusader in a journey to the Holy Land. If either should attempt to carry the dead carcass about with him upon his shoulders, failure in his purposes would be the sure result. A dead faith does not and cannot accomplish anything in Christian evangelism, and it is strange that people should persist in believing in it in spite of the clear teaching of the Bible, and of human experience as well. A man is saved by faith, but the world is not, nor can it be until God changes his plan of redemption and makes a new world.

Whatever the miracles of the past may have been we have no Aladdin-like reformations at the present day. The power of Heaven in the spiritual world, like that in the physical universe, is clear and pronounced, and there is no true Christian disciple but who must recognize it, but still the province of human action is not invaded or man's duty abrogated. The farmer plows his field and plants his seed,

and God's rain and sunshine and the wonderful development of the seed itself, give him a harvest; but God does not plow fields or tend the crop for lazy farmers, neither does he relieve Christian disciples from the need of definite thought and diligent service in the work of world redemption. The idea that this work can be shifted upon God's shoulders by a little lazy prayer is the darkest heresy that ever stained the history of the church or deadened its activities. It is not God's fault that the world is not saved, but the fault of those who preach and pray when sharp, decisive, persistent action is demanded. A church interminably upon its knees, while the cohorts of sin are charging about it, stealing the young men from the Sunday schools and the children from Christian homes, is a farce, all the theologians to the contrary notwithstanding. While the church prays the world is lost.

This is the new interpretation of theology that the world needs. Let the libraries of the dead past be burned if they cannot teach a theology that is adapted to the living present and that can redeem the world. Let those be denounced as heretics who declare that it is God's will and purpose that the world shall remain in sin for another century, or even for another year. Man damns his fellow men by his heartlessness and his neglect. It is not God who crushes out the soul life of the innocent child and leaves it to grow up a devil. God has given and will give to men the spiritual power of gods if they will but use it; but they, in their selfish greed, love self better than God, and their own pride and ease better than they love their fellow men or the welfare of the race. They even build palaces to worship in, while innocent children are left in squalor and neglect to grow up devils and criminals, or to fulfill whatever destiny Satan chooses for them.

We prove our belief in God by serving him; we test the value of the salvation we offer to others in a future world

by its evident effects upon our own lives in this one. The idea of a Heaven where men stand around and sing praises has served too long as a type of the Christian life. Christianity is not a negative grace or a social fad, but a positive force; and, like every other force in the world, it has its mission to accomplish. The religion of "being good," and thus standing as a signboard upon the road to Heaven, belongs to the dead past. This age of progress, when miracles are wrought by human wit and energy, has no use for a signboard Christianity. Mankind does not need a new religion, but the old one of Christ, and Paul, and James, and John rejuvenated, and with this the world can be redeemed.

The Bible may be made a glorious revelation from Heaven or a fetich with which to damn men's souls. The spirit of the gospel truth is far greater than the words that contain it, or the power of expression of those who wrote it. The retranslation of Genesis under the light of reason and the researches of modern science has redeemed the Bible from being a wizard book and has given us a beautiful and a consistent conception of God as a Creator and as the Ruler of the Universe. A retranslation of the remainder under the light of common sense and the plain teaching of human experience, will teach us the beautiful consistency of God's revelation to man, and of his plan for human redemption. We are not converted and turned to God by the power of angels, but by the kindly influence and loving sympathy of our fellow men. Humanity helping humanity upward and onward by the power of Christian love and sympathy, is a grander and more beautiful conception of God's dealings with men than any miraculous, wholesale redemption that the theologians have yet given us. This is the true Christianity. This is the effective preaching of the gospel that is to lead to the redemption of the whole world. This is the living, pulsing spirit of sympathy that binds us together

in one common brotherhood, and, through the God-man, unites us with our Father, God.

Can a gospel of words, and prayers that are forgotten as soon as uttered, redeem the world? Will men longer believe a mockery like this?

Concerning the Masses.

There are no masses of the people. Each individual man stands upon the apex of the world, with the zenith directly over him, and no human power can intervene between himself and God unless he wills it. Each man must be saved alone.

It is unfortunate that the church should ever have gotten the idea that men are masses, to be saved, if they are saved at all, by miraculous outpourings of Heavenly grace. That God does not save by wholesale methods is evident enough to any thoughtful observer, and yet the church will not amend either its practice or its theology. It is so much easier, apparently, to preach and pray a mass of mne into the kingdom of grace, than it is to go out after the individual man and win him by a kindly sympathy that convinces him that there is really such a thing as Christianity in the world!

Conversion, in the sense of turning men to the truth and leading them to God, is a hand to hand, a heart to heart work, and upon this individual work the church must enter if it hopes to redeem itself for its centuries of neglect and of thoughtless indifference. Each soul has its own surroundings of doubt, of indifference, of the feeling of neglect by Christian people, and each of these must be penetrated in special ways. Every revivalist knows how difficult it is to get the stranger from the seats under the gallery to the mourner's bench, and it is because the church is blindly feeling for him with a pair of religious tongs. The tongs

with which we fish for the souls of men must be cast aside. They don't pay. And if the religious twang with which we converse about our religion, goes with them, it will be all the better. They both belong to the oratorical era of evangelism, an era that is happily passing away, although the church has not yet learned how futile Christian oratory is as a means of a real salvation. The electrical era, when men shall stand elbow to elbow and salvation shall run from heart to heart by closed circuits, will be much better. Then the masses of the people will be reached and saved because the wire of human love and sympathy will be carried to every heart, and the individual man will be recognized as our brother, no matter how poor his station or uncouth his ways.

Some fifteen years ago a young man, having studied long and diligently upon that theological conundrum, "How shall we reach the masses of the people?" concluded that the printing press was the best possible modern pulpit, and the patient letter carriers were the best possible evangelists of salvation to the homes of the people. But when the young man, with more zeal than experience, attempted to carry this idea into practice and provide the church with the means of "carrying the gospel into every home," he quickly discovered that the question was only a tinkling symphony of words and an excuse for not reaching the "masses," or even attempting to reach them. When the young man's capital was spent the project was necessarily abandoned, but one thing was accomplished; the theological chestnut was retired from duty for a season, at least, and few have now the temerity to propound it. The very evident neglect of the masses by the church calls for no apology and has none.

Perhaps these words will meet with no greater response from Christian people than did the young man's ill-starred enthusiasm. Perhaps the time, these closing years of a

century great in everything but in moral advancement, is not yet ripe for a decided advance along all moral and Christian lines. Perhaps another century, another millennium, must pass before the church of Christ can be awakened from its lethargy and persuaded to really win the world for its Master, as it can easily do whenever it finds a worthy plea and is really determined that it shall be done. Perhaps billions upon billions of men must yet be lost simply because the Christian church is too indolent to re-learn the principles of its religion and to carry the gospel of a real salvation to them or to their ancestors, utterly unmindful of the fact that for every soul death it is directly responsible because it has failed to obey the clearly expressed commands of God.

Perhaps the church, by a religion that has no adequate effect upon the world, and does not make Christians of its own disciples, even, may yet convince the world that there is no God, and no real need of any salvation whatever. Perhaps mankind has really no destiny but to rot and to fertilize the earth that bore it. Perhaps these spirits of ours are only the chance beatings of so much brain tissue, and whether we live or die, or become saints or demons, does not matter. If all must die and rot, why should not men trample upon and destroy their fellow men, since the recruiting processes of nature will thereby be so much the sooner accomplished? If self is really God, why not leave men to make their own Heaven, or enjoy their own Hell, as pleases them best? Why should man interfere within the realm of his fellow-god?

But if there is a God in Heaven and a soul in man, if Revelation is true, and the Christian church is God's minister of salvation to a selfish and a misguided humanity, if man's destiny is to serve his fellow man and to live forever, then let the church of a living God put forever behind it the record of indolence and of indifference it has hitherto made, and let it prove its authority and its right to live by actually

accomplishing the mission which has been entrusted to it. Let it show to the world that it is not simply an aggregation of religious clubs, existing for selfish and social purposes, principally; and that its ministers are not preaching the gospel because they are well paid for it. Let it enter at once into the home and heart life of the people, as it may if it will use tact and go with evident blessings in its hands. Let it claim and hold the child life of the race for God, and for its own better destiny. Let it be true to itself and to humanity by being true to its duty and to its God. Let it even stop its preaching, if that will arouse its membership to action, and teach them that human sympathy and a divine salvation does not run from mouth to mouth. Let it even stop its praying, since it has no warrant to pray until its offering of honest service has been brought to God's altar of sacrifice and accepted. Let it even close its costly churches, which the masses will not enter, until it has gone out and found the masses and brought them with them to the house of God. The mission of the Christian is not to get to Heaven the easiest way he can; but, forgetting self, find others and send them Heavenward.

Are These Things True?

No man is stronger than the truth. Error may be perpetuated in thoughtless minds by the jugglery of words, but truth is its own expounder and witness. If the church of God is assailed without warrant; if another thousand years must necessarily pass before our next-door neighbors can be persuaded to listen to the truth and to accept it; if souls are damned simply because God wills it and fails to save them; if these words are but the vaporings of a termagant, then all that has been said in these pages falls to the ground and will have no beneficent effect. The hour of world redemption has not yet come. But if these words are true;

if the church of God has forgotten its mission and has failed to learn that human help and sympathy is a part of the religion it professes; if its sermons and prayers are only words without the spirit of love or the fire of enthusiasm; if the present world is being lost because the church will not think or enter actively upon the work of human redemption, then these words will stand however fiercely they may be assailed. They are not soft words, they have not been whispered in the churches lest the world should be led to imagine that the church is not infallible. Whoever strikes for the conscience and the heart of humanity must use strong words and loud ones. Whoever combats error must make it known to the whole world and not to a chosen few. The great heart of humanity is not dead. It loves the truth and will uphold it, and it can be moved in behalf of those who are in darkness or who suffer. And it will respond to the touch of those who appeal to it in behalf of humanity with the inspiration of living truth, however dull it may be to the patter of lifeless words. The world may yet be saved and the brotherhood of man can be made a glorious reality. But who shall lead in this work if not those who stand before the world as the called ministers of salvation and the evangelists of God's love and sympathy to a needy race? While men suffer and die is God only anxious that we shall bring him our fulsome praise and a devotion of barren words? Is this the only Christianity we can teach to men?

BOOK II.

A CENTURY TO BE REDEEMED.

What World Redemption Means.

If the whole civilized world were converted to our modern Christianity to-morrow, it would still be very far from being saved in any adequate sense of the word. A professed salvation is one thing, an actual realization of the idea of a Christian brotherhood, where the weak are the wards of the strong and the general good is the first thought of all, is another and a very different matter. We may all be converted in a theological sense and each traveling upon our happy way to Heaven, we may be charitable and kind, and also condescending to our weaker brethren and anxious that God shall give them as many blessings as we ourselves enjoy, and yet our Christianity may be a very selfish one, and an intense individualism may really separate us from those about us. "What is mine is mine alone!" is to-day the mark and motto of the fierce individualism of the race, and it is the law, even for Christian people. They may even give a tenth to religious and charitable purposes and still cling so tenaciously to the remainder and use it so selfishly, as to preclude the idea that they are really consistent followers of the unselfish Nazarene who did not even enjoy the privilege of living in a house with all the modern conveniences. They are Christians, perhaps, and yet selfishness and a love of the world and of display, holds a very large place in their hearts.

That the progress of the world up to this present time is the product of an intense individualism, cannot for a

moment be doubted. In this fierce contest of millions with each other the juggernaut car of progress has rolled over many a soul, and yet the ultimate result has been a beneficent one. It will probably be a sad day for the world when, either through the unguided drift of events or by the dogmatic action of masses of men, individualism wholly gives away before communism. And yet no thoughtful man can doubt but that the time has come when the two apparently antagonistic ideas, "Every man for himself," and "Every man for his brother," may be safely welded together and made the basis of a world religion that is certainly as old as St. Paul, since he very clearly enunciates it in his epistle to the Galatians.



We are individuals, not masses, and each of us stands alone and face to face with God. In the supreme moments of our lives we may even forget there is a world of humanity about us of which we are a component part. God, the Ego, and the material universe, are the sublime facts that force themselves upon our consciousness. Save God and the universe only, the Ego is supreme and the world is his. But with this supreme consciousness of the importance of the individual man to himself and possibly to his God or to the world, is the equally significant thought that in the aggregate Ego we count but one. A thousand million others stand in this same relation to God, and God himself has made us one family. Whoever has within him the breath of God, that acme of existence we call the soul, is our brother, and to discard this human relationship is to defy God, who commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We stand alone as individuals, but we stand arm to arm and heart to heart as children of one common Father. If we reject the claim of human brotherhood and live for selfish interests alone, we also give over our claim upon the Fatherhood of God. God and the world has given us what we have; if we will not return some portion of it in honest world service when it is so clearly and so reasonably demanded of us, we are not men, but animals in whom the instincts of humanity have died out.

If we love God we will love humanity, and if we love humanity we will find ways of expressing that love in tangible ways, even though we do not sell our goods and divide with the poor. If, after the manner of the rich young man whom Christ tested, we cling to the goods, there is the more reason why we should meet the supreme test of our Christianity in other ways. The test must come in some way or other, for God requires it of us as the price of our salvation. And the test comes to the church, just as surely as it does to the individual Christian. It must prove its right to the

name it bears and show to mankind that it is at least honestly trying to fulfill its mission to the world; and neither an individual, if he has the spirit of manhood within him, nor a church, if it is ruled by the spirit of obedience, should wish to ignore their relations to humanity or to shirk their duty in the smallest particular.

Not only must the church accept this exalted idea of its duty, but it must make the idea of the real brotherhood of humanity an established fact before the world can be redeemed and become ready to enter upon the glorious destiny that is surely in store for it. When a man's moral and material needs shall measure the contribution to which he is entitled from the world, and this measure shall be given to him pressed down and running over in return for his honest service, when each individual man, instead of being neglected or forgotten like a tramp or a homeless dog, shall be helped to stand in the full glory of his manhood with his fellows, equal with them in consideration if not in wealth or ability, then the work of the church militant will have been done and it may enter at once upon its reign as a church triumphant. For the world will be the church!

Of such men, redeemed from the intense selfishness and greed of humanity and taught the blessed significance of a love which is at once human and divine, is the kingdom of Heaven. And whether on earth or in Heaven their value and their reward is the same. The world needs them to-day far more than it ever needed them before, and far more than Heaven will need them when their reward is complete, for to-day is surely the dawn of the millennial era of happiness for mankind, if man will only have it so.

Are there many such men who can be depended upon in any emergency, in the world to-day? Do our churches teach a religion like this? Shall it be said that, being devils, we cannot attain to such a standard of manhood, no, not for a thousand years? Or is the millennium of our

hopes easily attainable whenever we really wish for it and are ready to enter into its possession in the spirit of those who love God supremely, and humanity as themselves? The question comes to each one of us: Believing this, shall we help to make it true?

One Single Soul and a World to Save.

The budding intelligence in the child's mind is not more pronounced than the budding desire in the mother's heart that her child shall have the very best destiny possible, and that it shall be kept pure and true. Very possibly she realizes her inability to give her child all that she would gladly will for it if she had the power, and she would gladly welcome the help of those who are wiser and stronger than herself. For the time her child is everything to her, and she both needs help and is willing to receive it, however indifferent to it she may become in future years.

This is the golden opportunity of the church. The child is theirs if Christian people would only claim it and hold it against the world, and against the temptations of the world. With the aggregated wisdom of an army of mothers, they could teach that anxious one how to train her child for its own best welfare and the welfare of the race. With the loving sympathy of those who know only too well a child's temptations they could throw around that one child a wall of care that no devil or demon could penetrate. With every child corraled with a living and a loving fence of care, with every father enlisted in this work of saving his own child and the children of his neighbors from the effect of his own foolish vices, there would be few who could or would tempt it into a life of sin.

Where are Christian people in these hours of opportunity and of peril? Safely ensconced within their places of worship, mourning over the sins of those who reject God's commands, and wondering why God does not see fit to save

the world! Perhaps the child attends Sabbath school for one short hour each week; perhaps it does not. But whether it does or not, it is forgotten when the Sabbath school is dismissed, and the child is sent out to endure a full week of temptation, even in its own neglected home. The church forgets the child; it forgets its duty; it forgets its opportunity, and out of twenty young men, nineteen are not saved!

The father loves his prattling child. Whoever says that he does not has never known a father's love. He damns him by his example simply because the connection between a father's selfish habits and the character of the child has never been made clear to his understanding. The second commandment may have been drilled into his intellect, but he has never been effectually taught its deep and terrible significance upon the children who honor him in their way, and follow in his footsteps. As his own father passed the curse of habit and indifference to him, so he passes it on to those whom he loves, but whom he heedlessly destroys by his influence and his example.

Where is the arm that shall be reached out to save the child, the hand that shall restrain the father's guilt? They are in our churches impotently raised to Heaven in prayer for a miraculous salvation, not even for this one child, but for the masses of the people! The prayers go on interminably, but the interest of the father is not enlisted, and the child is lost. And, by and by, the church awakens to the fact that evil is rampant in the world, and stands by the very church doors to steal the souls of those who enter and come out. Not even the homes of Christian people are sure refuges for the children who dwell therein, and who are compelled to run the gauntlet of derision or of temptation between them and the church. Instead of the church going into all the world and preaching the gospel effectively to every creature, it is corraled by Satan within its very

meeting houses, and it has not yet had wit enough to even discover this fact. Whoever seeks to win the world by doing nothing, is won himself by Satan, but does not know it.

Is this the only inspiration our Bible gives to Christian men? Then it is a man-clipped and a pasted Bible and a book of lies. The Heavenly inspiration is cut out, and all that is left is the dead form of a dead religion, which is of very little use to men.

Three times within the century has a new generation been born upon the earth, and three times, nay a thousand times three times, has the opportunity been given to the church to save the world by simply keeping the children pure, and holding them firmly for Christ, but each time the opportunity has been cast aside. The droning hum of our Sunday schools has arisen for one short hour each week, but the children have not been saved. Satan and the world has gotten the children, or the most of them, and the saloons, fed by the growing manhood of the race, still continue to flourish. The church gets little or nothing that it did not have before, not even a little rich experience that might serve it upon future occasions of a similar nature. It has not even learned that the saloon can easily be destroyed by drying up its custom, and it still continues to murder the poor saloon keeper with its cruel words and to wonder when God will smite him and destroy his business, with his avenging arm.

The world can never be won by wholesale methods. Each individual soul must be found and saved by itself alone. When the church heedlessly allows the children, and especially the young men, to slip beyond its influence and to go out into the world unsaved and with hearts disgusted with religion and hardened to the truth, it is only courting final disaster. The world is not to be won in any such heedless, negligent way. No earthly master would be satisfied with such slipshod work as the church is trying to palm off upon

God to-day as the full measure of its Christian service. Why should Christian people think that God is less exacting, and that he is pleased with worship when he demands service and service only?

What man in all the church is done with vain pretense, and remembering what God has done for him, is ready to return to God the full measure of earnest service? Who enlists for God and for humanity, and is ready now for the spiritual conquest of the world?

The Redemption of a Community.

The evangelization of a community is a simple problem. It is a question of definite work and the adoption of common sense methods, not of faith and exhortation. There is no theological dogma more firmly established by argument and a reference to separate texts of Scripture, than is the simple fact, well tested by experience, that God will not answer the prayers of a lazy church or of a lazy Christian. For this reason the lazy church or lazy Christian should stop praying for a little season and try the saving power of a little unselfish Christian work. When they have learned the clear distinction between prayer and service, then let them learn to pray.

It is just as clearly proven by experience that it requires something more than exhortation to get neglected children into the Sunday school and keep them there, and to make sincere Christian men and women of them, or of the larger sinners who come within the parish bounds of any church. For this reason exhortation should be laid aside for a season and the power of well directed work and example tried in its stead. Whatever the power of prayer and of exhortation may be, it is folly to suppose that they constitute the whole of the duty of the Christian, or even of a Christian minister. It is only another example of the absurdity of learning our religion in the schools alone, and of trying to impart it by

word of mouth. It takes wit and energy to accomplish anything in this world, and the work of turning a wayward soul from its selfish interests and its forgetfulness and leading it to God, is no exception to the rule. The enginery of Heaven is at the service of those who have done their full duty toward God and toward man, but it is not at the beck and call of those who would shift their duties upon God's shoulders and make him their hired servant. Will the church ever learn this clear distinction between faith and lazy indifference, between the trust of a Christian soldier in the face of the enemy and the happy-go-lucky indolence of the camp follower? Or is this doctrine of the significance and absolute necessity of Christian service too hard for it to master and accept?

For those who are willing to leave the blunders and deficiencies of the past forever behind them, and who for the future are determined to do their full duty toward both God and man, a carefully considered plan of campaign is the first thing demanded, and the idea that Heaven will furnish this, and also see that it is carried into execution, is another comfortable doctrine that experience explodes. Heaven has furnished brains to Christian men and women, just as it has furnished them to business men and inventors, and it is clearly intended that they shall use them in their Christian work, as they do in their every-day strife for the material blessings of life. The Scriptural doctrine of inspiration was never intended for people who will neither think nor act no matter how clearly their duty has been pointed out to them. It is for Christian disciples, and for them alone.

With a common-sense plan of campaign and a genuine, unselfish, active Christianity to convert people to, with a determination that every soul shall be reached by some definite Christian influence, and that no child shall be allowed to go down to death unsought, or to drift beyond the care and solicitude of the church, and success, even as a

human undertaking, is only a question of work and of persistence. With the power of Heaven and of a holy enthusiasm superadded to this, the miracle of world redemption could easily be accomplished.

The idea that because a dead church, one that is waiting for the fire and the whirlwind of God's wrath to spur it into action, has taken two thousand years to convert the world and has hardly commenced the work as yet, a thousand years or more must elapse and countless generations be lost before the work can be completed, is arrant nonsense. If one year is not enough in which to redeem our American world and make its example the forerunner of peace and happiness to the whole earth, surely five would be. It takes but a moment of time for a man to face eternity and become subject to his God, and in this matter men do not need to wait their turn. Let those who cry, "The time is too short; we are all devils and will not be converted," stand aside and see what miracles God can accomplish through Christian men and women when these are subject to his revealed will and really anxious to accomplish it. The belief that God is not yet ready for the world to be saved and that generations must go down to eternal death while Christians still continue to preach aimlessly and pray with little faith, is the rankest heresy that Satan ever invented and imposed upon a confiding church.

Will the church stand still and continue to stammer its faithless prayers and deliver its homilies upon religion, or will it enter at once upon the work of saving souls from death and thereby redeem a world from sin? It is not a question of doctrine, of faith, or of conformity to the traditions of the church, but of actually accomplishing the work that has been entrusted to it. Upon what possible plea that does not charge God with indifference to the salvation of his creatures can the work be postponed a single day or a single hour?

The exactions of duty are always sharp and imperative and cannot be postponed without disgrace. The choice between the barren past and the better future lies sharp and clear before us. There can be no possible gain in farther delay, but, instead, we know that there will be irreparable loss. If we can find no inspiration for the work in the Bible or in human need, Heaven will certainly not answer our heartless prayers for more. Will the church, having obtained some faint conception of the truth, act upon it, or will it still continue to wait, not for the inspiration of Heaven, but for its wrath?

Forward, or the Retreat.

In the closing years of this most remarkable of all the centuries, the church is on trial before mankind as it never was before. In the dark ages of the world, a church that would not do its duty or improve its opportunities, could pass without serious criticism. But that time is forever past, and it is well that it is past. When the tension of human thought and energy is at its utmost, when each year marks a new era and decades take the place of centuries, neither inaction or weakness in an organization that should be the most active and the strongest of all should be tolerated for a moment. And, in its self-complacency, for the church to fight off criticism and to surround itself with an atmosphere of infallibility and conceit, is one of the greatest follies that it could be guilty of.

Indeed the church of Christ is to-day on trial for its very life, and neither a Christianity that is a blind pretense, or a church that wilfully and persistently shirks its duty, can hope to live. To-day it receives the polite toleration of the world at large. It is doing no harm, and it is evidently doing some good, although vastly less than the opportunities before it demand. To-morrow, if it does not bestir itself, and seek to actually fulfill its mission in the world, it

may merit only the world's indifference and contempt. The clanging bells of time that usher in a new century will mark a balancing of human accounts that will be stricter and more searching than ever before. In the changing standards of human life and action, the old and the ineffectual is rapidly being cast aside, and only the best and truest can hope to exist. In the business world the machinery of yesterday is antiquated to-day, and to-morrow it will be worthless, not because it was not excellent machinery in its time, but because it is not the best and thoroughly up to date. The same thing is true in almost every department of human activity. And yet there are those in the religious world who, while they recognize the many failings and shortcomings of the church, seem to think that it should be humored and apologized for, and not asked to move up to the highest standards of efficiency, simply because it is the church, and is supposed to be above criticism. The centuries pass and the work of the church is not done, and yet it will not admit that it is in any sense to blame. It is God's fault that the world is not saved!

Christ evidently did not imagine that his disciples would take twenty centuries to convert the world and make such a miserably poor job of it in the end as we seem to have done thus far. Unless we can do better in the remaining five years of the present century, unless we can redeem our own land and thus pave the way for a speedy moral redemption of the whole world, it were better that we frankly acknowledge our failure and seek for the organization of some more effectual means of saving humanity from its miseries, if not from its sins. Why should we stand in the way of human progress if we are really unwilling to help it forward? Why should we claim to be the disciples of Christ if we will not do the work that Christ entrusted to his church?

Let it never be said that the twentieth century after

Christ is likely to dawn upon a world in which there is not one single country redeemed and subject to God's will, and upon a church that is still lifeless and apparently beyond redemption. There is certainly enough moral sentiment in our progressive land to save us from this fate, if it is aroused and well directed. We are not heathen because we do not really care for our fellow men. We are not savages, sucking the life-blood from our less fortunate and perhaps silly fellow beings that we may ourselves live in a selfish luxury, simply because we are incapable of human feeling. It is because the church, which we have been depending upon to save the world and to bring us to better ways of thinking and to higher standards of righteousness, has been vainly praying for a miraculous world redemption, rather than one that is to be brought about by well planned human agencies. Those who should have been active Christian soldiers, bravely fighting the battles of humanity and winning them in the name of Christ, have been dwelling in camps and seldom venturing outside the walls of their comfortable churches. It has been a warfare of empty words, which echo back upon the speakers from deaf ears, as they do from plaster walls. And the ceiling bounds their power with God, as the walls do their influence upon humanity.

The Redemption Years.

The time will soon come when the church, if it will not seek out new ways for getting into the home and the heart life of the people and turning them to righteousness both toward God and toward man, will become a dishonored and a discredited church and humanity will be compelled to blindly grope for some more effective means for redeeming and uplifting itself, and for obtaining some just conception of the God who created it and is still guiding its destinies. Five years of the present century remain in which the

church may prove its mission to the world and its willingness to fulfill it. If it still fails, what reason is there that it should ask for another century in which to show its incompetency for the work entrusted to it? With nineteen centuries well nigh wasted, what reason have we for believing that the twentieth would not be wasted also?

The church can save the world if it will—nothing is more certain than that—it could have saved it in any one of the centuries of the past if it had been true to itself and to its trust. It can readily save this glorious American world of ours in the few short years of the century that is still left to us, if it will only go about the work with a determination that will take no denial. Our God is not dead or sleeping, or utterly indifferent to the salvation of his people. Neither is there any one in any community who is so base that he cannot be reached within five years' time with some definite and effectual Christian influence, if the church will really seek for him and for some means of touching his heart. Religious homilies will not do. They amount to little or nothing as a world-regenerating force. But if the church refuses to seek for these opportunities or to improve them when they are found; if it declares that it has nothing to do but to preach and to pray, and leave men to go down to death unsaved either from the power of Satan or of human injustice, if it persists in claiming that it is God's business to save the world at its behest, and that it is not at fault, then let it be set aside and new means be found for bringing the gospel of God-love and an honest human brotherhood to mankind.

Truth and righteousness are not dead in the world. The cause of humanity still lives and human thought can be quickened into a glorious enthusiasm for humanity's welfare, even though the heavenly appointed champions of humanity's cause may be recreant to their duty. By the power of a living God and the ability and wisdom he will give to

those who may lead in this work, the cause of human justice, or human kindness, and of an honest heart allegiance to our Heavenly Father, will move forward until the world itself shall be redeemed and saved. The church, by refusing the office of leadership in this work, and by a too close allegiance to past traditions, may hinder the work, but it cannot stop it. The world will be redeemed, for God himself has declared that it shall be. Let not those whose joy it should be to hasten that day, postpone it by parading before the world the skeleton of past traditions and the sanctity of ancient customs. Let dogma go to the winds if men can only be persuaded to serve God and to love their fellow men. And they will do this when the church teaches Christianity by its example and by its unconquerable determination, and not by empty words and by the dry formalities of our modern religion.

Why should Christian men fight against the truth and against God, thereby delaying for years and centuries the coming of the spiritual kingdom of Christ? Why should not every heart be ready for a spiritual crusade that would sweep over this land of ours like a welcome rain when the earth is parched and dry? Is it because we are all devils and will not be converted to the truth? Is it because we care nothing for God or for the world, but only for our selfish interests and for the spiritual ease that comes from spiritual inaction? Being Christians in name, are we still heathen because we only love ourselves and care nothing for God's commands or for our neighbor's welfare?

Men Can be Won.

Men are not fools. They will not accept form and pretense for solid truth. But whatever is clearly and unmistakably proven to be worthy of their thoughtful consideration will meet with at least a measure of approval and of support from the majority of thinking people. A real, result-

compelling Christianity, one that is not only self-evidently true, but which stirs the hearts of its disciples to enthusiasm and to unselfish action would not lack for converts. Such a Christianity as this would sweep over the whole world and quickly claim it for truth and for the church. And yet, can any one say why our Christianity should not be all this and more?

This is an intensely practical age, and men are not to be won to self-sacrifice and a consecrated life by a Christianity that does not prove itself complete in every respect as it goes along. They acknowledge their duty, they are even ready to admit their sins against Heaven, if not against man, but they are not religious and they will refuse to become so, until the word can be redeemed from the stigma of reproach which clings to it and be made to mean something more than it does in the church to-day. If we have nothing to offer men but a salvation in some future life and a negative, almost aimless experience in this one, we have a barren plea and one that thinking men will not accept. Even if the Bible and their own experience did not teach them that an indolent faith is dead and valueless, they would not respond readily to the idea of a dogmatic salvation and a Christianity with neither the fire of action or the spirit of the self-denying love which Christ himself exemplified, to recommend it to their consideration.

That the church is to-day presenting to the world an emasculated Christianity of this character, one largely made up of the froth of aspiration rather than of the fire of inspiration, and which ignores the duties and opportunities of the present in a beatific vision of future happiness, is because its religion has been learned in the schools and in poring over commentaries, rather than in a study of the present moral needs of the world and in a diligent search for remedies for present ills. The religion of the era of Christ, even, will not suffice in all respects for the twentieth

century after Christ, because the whole aspect of human life has changed since then, and new problems invariably demand new remedies. Neither can men of the present age be won by the religion of the dark ages of the world, or by methods which have invariably failed wherever they have been tried. Even the religion of yesterday will not do for to-day, for God's work ever moves onward. People may still unite with the church from a strong sense of duty, or because their emotions may sometime have been quickened, but even that does not make Christian disciples of them. The religion of emotion and of inaction has had its day; now comes the one of heroic purpose and of decisive energy. The world must be redeemed and for this reason the disciples of Christ must be mustered anew and every Christian soldier must be called upon to do his duty. A paper army wins no victories and overthrows no giant wrongs.

It is not difficult to persuade men to lay down their very lives, if that is necessary, in defense of great principles. When the liberties of a country are in danger, the young men eagerly enlist in its defense. The call for help and sympathy in any great and worthy cause invariably meets with a response. Then why should the Christian church be so impotent and nerveless before its foes? With the grandest plea that was ever presented to man; with a glorious cause that should enlist every man's sympathy and his most earnest support; with the Son of God as the Captain and Leader of our hosts, and with the rewards of both Heaven and earth at our command, not one single year should be required in which to win this whole land for righteousness, for God, and for humanity. But with this cause and with an inspiration that should stir the dullest heart, behold a waiting and a trembling host, the despair of its friends and the derision of its enemies, substituting for the inspiration of Heaven weak lectures upon morality, and as weakly declaring that the work before it is impossible; that it can

only preach and pray and wait for some miraculous world redemption!

Can God consistently answer the prayers of an indolent, faithless host like this? Will victory perch upon the banners of an army that hides in camp and shudders at the mere suggestion of a conflict? When will the church learn that action, not sentiment, is the basis of salvation and the price of victory? When will it give up its camp routine and its day-dreams of bliss, and enter with vigor and with determination upon the conquest of the world for Christ and for humanity which was entrusted to it almost nineteen centuries ago?

Is it an unwarrantable demand that the church of Christ should be asked to take higher ground than ever before, and at once and without equivocation, fulfill its mission to the world?

A Signboard Religion.



A prayer-meeting activity, a mere freshening and polishing of the surface in our Christian experience, will not suffice in the place of a definite interest and actual service in behalf of the Heavenly-appointed wards of the church. This has its value, just as a dress parade in plumes and feathers has its value in a military camp. But every tried soldier knows that there are no dress parades up-

on an active campaign. There is no time for them. The

enemy must be found and either conquered or captured. The time for dress parades, for the mere freshening of the outward appearance, is forgotten. There is work to be done, and unless the leaders are dress paraders and camp boosters it cannot be done too quickly.

The church to-day seems to be striving after the plumes and the speckless clothing of the dress parade, and because it is such tremendously hard work for a Christian with little or nothing to do to keep himself up to the exhibition point, where he can shine as an example to others, that they call this Christian service! Going to and from the prayer meeting room, and giving one's experiences while there, is supposed to be the means by which God is converting and redeeming the world!

Some good soldiers can be won by a beautiful dress parade, but this country, north and south, would never have enlisted four million soldiers for dress parade purposes. Good soldiers require an adequate motive; poor ones can be bought for show. In trying to make the way to Heaven too easy for its converts, the church has missed its mission and degraded the cause that gave it birth. Instead of a conquering host, the church of God has become a signboard army, and is making the usual progress that signboards do.

Drill, drill, drill, forever drilling within closed walls, and waiting for the world to come to it to be saved! The church does not even learn a lesson from ancient Jericho. Then the enemy was within, and the eager hosts of God were without and really anxious to capture the city. And God helped them! But now the hosts of God are within the walls, unwilling to stir beyond them, while the enemy is encamped close about and utterly indifferent as to what the church does as long as it stays inside. And earnest prayers for victory have no avail. Possibly it would be another miracle of grace, although the church does not pray for it, if the walls should tumble down by miraculous agencies,

and our Christianity were compelled to find a lodging place in the hearts and homes of the people outside the walls. Of what use is a boxed-up, signboard Christianity when the hearts of humanity are not only to be reached, but won? Can a signboard enthusiasm ever win the world for Christ?

If men are to be converted by the spiritual machinery of Heaven, of what use is a Christian church? If even Christians will not exemplify the brotherhood of man after they are converted, why should Heavenly energy be wasted upon such a barren task as that of converting them? If the Christian church is of no use to the world except to supplement in some feeble way the business integrity of the age which is making men honest, and the social courtesy that is making them kind, why not let business integrity and social courtesy be our standards of excellence and be satisfied with that? Why continue our vain professions of obedience to God and of love for our fellow men if religious entertainment and a deadening of the Christian conscience is the main result of our expenditures for the preaching of the gospel? How much has all this expenditure added to the Christian stature or to Christian energy in the last century? How much has it added to the happiness and to the welfare of our communities in the last year, or in the last five years? Why should not church vestrymen balance this account while they balance the other, and ask themselves if a signboard religion really pays?

Wanted: Modern Ideas and a Little Vim.

The real salvation of mankind evidently requires a new order of things in churchly thought and action. The cant of a babe-like dependence upon the will of God, which means nothing but inaction, must be given up. God evidently has no use for Christian babes in the conquest of the world. The dependence upon God of the Christian disciple who is really working for the salvation of his neighbors

and the regeneration of his community, is a great and a sublime truth; the trust of the one who is forever praying for inspiration but who never gets it, and who can learn no enthusiasm in the needs of the world about him, is evidently valueless.

In the place of all this word religion and a dead faith there must be hard work, earnest thought, tact in approaching men, and a bulldog persistence. It is easier to write sermons and deliver them than it is to arouse the activities of a people and set them at work along practical lines, or to transform the moral and social life of a community. It is easier to denounce card playing, dancing, and theatre-going from the pulpit, than it is to either suggest or to provide social amusements for young people that will actually take the place of these. It is easier, too, to denounce the poor saloon-keeper and the place he has fitted up for the entertainment of those who are tired of the monotony of a dull and uneventful home life, than it is to delve down into the social problem until a remedy for the saloon has been found and applied within the home itself. It is easier, also, to cling to the machinery of established customs in church and Sunday school work and simply stand up and go through the motions, than it is to break away from these customs and introduce new methods that will make Christian work uniformly successful. It is easier to let children drift in and out of the Sunday school, and to sing, "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy," than it is to make the motto, "No soul unsought; no child not won," the law and aim of Christian activity. It is much easier to lie down and dream of a miraculous world redemption than it is to arise and by the power of an unconquerable determination, trusting in the power and the willingness of God to do his part in the work, to bring that redemption to pass in any community.

If it were not for the unconquerable instinct of life in the human breast, and the punishment of pain that attends

upon self-destruction, it would be easier in some instances to lie down and quietly starve to death than it would be to get up and go out into the world in a fierce struggle for existence. Nature compels men to struggle for physical life, but Christian activity depends only upon the divine qualities of love and enthusiasm within our own breasts. But we, ignoring our duty to God and to the world, ignoring the glorious opportunities before the church and the call of human sympathy, which sometimes stirs our hearts, sit down with folded hands and dream of future outpourings of Heavenly grace when God will convert the world without any trouble upon our part whatever. Like the moral starvelings upon our streets who will not work, we have only learned to hold up our hands for the spiritual food that keeps us from complete extinction.

God commands us to win the world for him, but we have already forgotten our mission and our duty. The world is ours if we will only claim it, but we will not even do that. Humanity can certainly be won, not in some future age of the world, but now, and yet we will not take the trouble to learn how. The coffin-like walls of our churches bury our activity and our influence as completely as though the sleep of death has settled over the whole Christian world. As far as any adequate result upon humanity is concerned, the church is virtually dead and our Christianity a pretence. The living fire of enthusiasm has gone out. We know not God, and have forgotten our neighbor's direst need. Our hearts are cold and still. What care we for the childhood of the race or for the masses of the people? If they will not believe in our barren plea and accept our churchly salvation, let them die in their sins! Why should our peace be disturbed by strenuous efforts to save them if they do not even care to be saved?

Though men die and the childhood of the race is lost, our peaceful dreams go on. But Satan lives and works!

The power of evil to perpetuate itself shames the feeble efforts and the thoughtless indifference of Christian people. Christian sentiment and moral heroism to-day appears to be a barren mockery. Satan is joint ruler with God in America in the year 1896 simply because the disciples of God are dreaming in their tents. Is it blasphemy to declare this? Then let the stigma rest where the blame for the fact itself belongs!

Five Years Enough.

Can this world in epitome which we call America, be transformed and redeemed within the limits of the present century?

If salvation were a laborious process and men were compelled to wait their turn before they could become reconciled to God, a million years might not suffice for the salvation of the whole world. But in this electrical age when the enthusiasm for some worthy cause may sweep over the earth in a single day and the text of a new religion of an honest love for God and a genuine human sympathy can be made known to every civilized man within a week, it is folly to stand idly waiting for the centuries to bring a Heaven-sent, wizard-like reformation into men's hearts and lives. That this is not God's plan for human redemption has been proven over and over again in every century since the Christian era commenced, and it is proven to-day more conclusively than ever before. Only a blind and indolent church can ignore this plain object lesson of the centuries and declare that it has nothing to do but to pray and to wait until the whole world shall be converted by Heavenly agencies. God brings wonders to pass in every age of the world, but in every case the instruments he uses are human instruments, and these instruments, like perfect machinery, must do the work they are set to do, or failure is the sure result.

A moment of time is sufficient when a man has come to the point where he is convinced of his duty and is determined to change the destinies of his life. A year is ample

time in which to change the destinies of a great people when world problems are being solved. In times of great danger a single month is sufficient in which to arouse the activities of a nation and prepare for deadly war. To say that centuries must elapse before a few million men can be convinced of the truth and persuaded to accept it, is a mere excuse for inaction and a blind for the insufficiency of the modern plea for salvation. A word reformation based upon dogma can never be brought about; a heart reformation based upon absolute truth and the principles of human sympathy and honest obedience to God, can be accomplished whenever the church has reached the point of accepting absolute truth in the place of its dogma, and is determined that the work before it shall be done.

Truth, when it is put in a form in which it may be clearly apprehended, will never fail of acceptance. It is because of the false conceptions of truth, even among its advocates, and the barnacles of error which still cling to it and which thinking men will not accept, that no greater progress has been made in its advancement.

What power does the modern conception of Christianity have over the heart of the average man? It is his duty to become a Christian, to be sure, but, practically, what is to be accomplished by it? Is the Christian so far beyond the moral man in his sympathy for humanity and his zeal in its behalf, that the distinction between them is clear and unmistakable? When even Christians fail to exemplify the principles of a Christian brotherhood among themselves, and neither their love for God or for humanity prompts them to enter upon an active campaign for the conquest of the hearts of their fellow men, why should other hearts be touched or the enthusiasm of a great cause lay hold upon their activities?

A lifeless cause wins no converts; a barren plea touches no heart and arouses no conscience. A selfish salvation

may appeal to a man's cupidity but it excites no enthusiasm. To seek salvation may be a laudable purpose, but only those who forget Heaven and work for the salvation of the race can claim the name of Christians. And with all these dragging deficiencies in our modern conception of Christianity, even the call of duty loses its power. Duty? Why should a man get himself saved and then sit down and pray? If the church is not at fault; if it is God's will and pleasure that the majority of men shall be lost and human effort can accomplish nothing, then let us not desert our weaker brethren and go on our happy way to a selfish, theological Heaven. Let us all be damned together!

Is this heresy? Or is it heresy to imagine that God has provided a selfish salvation for professed Christian people and that they have little or no concern with the salvation of the world outside of themselves? Is man his brother's keeper, or may he forget him and thus become his enemy?

The main question is not how long it will take to convert the world, but how long it will take to first convert the church.

BOOK III.

THE CRUSADE PLAN.

A World Forgotten.

The child-life of the world presents a wide field of infinite possibilities for Christian thought and effort and for well directed energy, and yet the deep significance of these opportunities are well nigh forgotten by Christian people. The very well-springs of influence lie here, and nations may be made or lost in the cradles of the race, and yet less than one-half of the children and young people are in the Sunday schools or under definite Christian influence. With the destinies of the remainder, or with their influence upon the moral life of the world, the church apparently does not concern itself.

And it is a field that is open and waiting if the church would only enter in and fully possess it. There is no parent so base that he does not wish a better destiny for his child than he is able to give it, unaided. There are few who would not gladly give their help and influence to promote a better moral training for the young, if their help were really solicited in a way that would convince them of its importance. Every hindrance would quickly fade away before the determined energy and aroused enthusiasm of people who were really anxious to win the world for Christ. We have an overabundance of the lazy faith which takes it for granted that God is going to convert the world for us; we seem to have none in the power of an active, common sense Christianity over the hearts of men, and which will be able to enlist them in the cause of human progress and of the real salvation of the world.

The redemption of the childhood of the race from the many temptations to sin, to indolence, to frivolity, and its salvation from every weakening tendency, is a nobler and a more inspiring cause than any that ever enlisted the sympathies of men. The world of childhood saved from sin and taught true Christian manhood and womanhood means a world redeemed! Let the church amend its slipshod, one-hour-a-week methods of winning the children for Christ, and actually save those who come within its influence, for a better and a nobler destiny, and it can boldly claim the sympathy and the service of every one. The world stands ready to be enlisted in an active Christianity; it can never be won for an emotional one, which means feeling and an abundance of talk, but no service. There is nothing that succeeds like success; there is nothing that fails like failure. And with its record of one young man saved in twenty, it is, perhaps, little wonder that the church has no stronger hold upon the gratitude and admiration, or upon the sympathies of the people.

The careless mother can be won for the church through her love for her child, if she can be convinced by actual observation that in the church lies safety for him and Christian manliness. The thoughtless father can be led to abandon his vices upon the plea of his child's welfare, who would be deaf to the call of abstract duty. And yet these powerful pleas for higher living and a more earnest co-operation with the purposes of the church, are almost entirely neglected. The duty plea rings out almost interminably from our pulpits. We beg of men to get themselves saved and become living signboards upon the way to Heaven. We seldom think to ask them to help save their own children, and the world as well. The childhood of the race is ours if we will claim it and hold it for Christ, and through the children we can save the parents also. But we sing praises in our churches and wonder when God will save

mankind from its sins of neglect and indifference, utterly unmindful of the fact that we are the very greatest sinners of all.

We have our Sunday schools, to be sure, and we point to them as a remarkable evidence of the wisdom and activity of the church, but how insufficient these are in really promoting a Christian manhood and womanhood among the children from unchristian homes need not be told. Even the children from Christian homes are not always safe from the persistent and subtle temptations which assail them everywhere, and possibly in their own homes. An hour of catechetical instruction each week is a mere feather's weight in counteracting the positive evil influence of a whole week of temptation and of thoughtless example, which every child must undergo. Unless the church works far harder than this, it cannot hope to win the children, and through them, the world itself.

And yet, who can estimate the possibilities that we so carelessly throw aside when we neglect or forget a little child. St. Paul was once a child, and so was every one who ever helped to make this world a better and a happier place to live in. In the life of every child there are infinite possibilities for good if they could only be developed and wisely trained. It may be that there are to-day among the children of civilized lands, a million St. Pauls if the church could only find them and train them in the cause of Christ.

Whatever the temptations of the child may be, they are still worse when a boy emerges from the restrictions of childhood and begins to look out upon the world with some measure of independence. The saloon standard of manhood is to-day the prevailing type in our American world. Our growing boys seldom take ministers or total abstainers for their models of manhood. They are far more likely to take the hearty, hale fellow who patronizes the saloon, and who represents it to the world. The influence of a Chris-

tian man is a negative one, the influence of the better class of saloon patrons is positive and very pronounced. There is nothing in abstinence from evil habits that attracts attention, but the three saloon graces, the habit of drink and its concomitant habit, treating, the silly habit of the use of tobacco, and the equally inexcusable habit of profanity, all indulged in in a gentlemanly and brusque way, of course, immediately attract notice and seem to lead the newly enfranchised male mortal to zealous emulation. The cigarette or the cigar is the commencement, and the rest follow as a matter of course; or, if they do not follow, the cigar alone marks very distinctly the dividing line between selfishness and unselfishness, which the young man passes, perhaps never to return. From that time on his ruling motive is self-indulgence and the sterner qualities of Christian manhood have no attraction for him. With all our efforts we still fail to save our children from the ridiculous vices of humanity, and they tell us that nineteen young men, many of them from our Sunday schools, choose the saloon standard of manhood, or incline toward it, to every one who is persuaded to enlist with Christian people for the moral and spiritual regeneration of the world.

The child is forgotten and is allowed to drift whichever way he will, the young man is neglected and mourned over, but the world is not saved. Is our cause really such an unworthy and insignificant one that it weighs as nothing beside the claims of the cigarette, and only one young man in twenty can be enlisted in its defense? Or have we forgotten our cause and the God who redeemed us, and are only concerned in providing religious entertainment upon the Sabbath for ourselves and for our children?

A Push for the Masses.

The industrial life of the people should certainly receive some serious consideration from the church. The masses of the people are working people, and whatever affects their toil lies very close to their hearts. An organization deeply interested in their salvation in another world, should not be utterly unmindful of their salvation from unnecessary miseries in this one.

The church is supposed to contain the greater proportion of the rich men of the country. It is its boast that the successful men of the country are to be found within its ranks. Here is a grand opportunity for it to inaugurate a millionaire's crusade for better conditions among working-men, and, incidentally, a conquest of their souls. But beyond founding a few colleges for the children of the well-to-do, and miscellaneous charity doles of one kind and another, what influence are the Christian millionaires of our land exerting upon the moral and spiritual life of the people? The field is a wide one, and one well worthy of the energies of any philanthropist, but how many earnest enthusiasts are there who are supplied with abundant means for carrying their plans for bettering humanity into actual practice? Does money deaden the spiritual activities of a man, or is it a mere coincidence that the enthusiasts have little money, while those who are rich are either spiritually dead, or are so busy taking care of their money that they have forgotten the world from which their money came?

The prominent manufacturers of the land are largely found within the ranks of the church or in close affiliation with it. A Christian movement for thriftiness, morality, and improved methods of living among working people, inaugurated and engineered by the Christian capitalists of the land, would go very far toward solving all labor problems and at the same time capture the hearts of those prom-

inently benefited. The common sense philanthropy of the next century will doubtless devise some means for giving to working people all the advantages which abundant capital and wholesale methods of caring for the bodily man can provide for them. The workingman's wages, well spent in wholesale purchases and wholesale methods of living, would give to all a comfort which few now enjoy. Why not bestow some thought upon this matter and inaugurate the good work at once, thus gaining for the toilers of the land some happy years of modest luxury amid vastly more favorable surroundings, and only asking in return that they, as well as their benefactors, shall exhibit the spirit of Christian courtesy and a brotherly kindness? Or is the promotion of the Christian spirit and a brotherhood among men, something utterly foreign to the purposes of the church?

Co-operation, not among laboring men alone, but between capital, talent and labor, appears to be the logical, Christian solution of the labor problem. When each is interested to a greater or less degree in what concerns the welfare of all and capitalist and laborer count their gains in an equal ratio, there will be a community of feeling that can never exist between masters and their men. State co-operation is an iridescent dream, but Christian co-operation may become a beautiful and consistent reality. And surely Christian capitalists, if they love humanity, can accord the mutual benefits of profit-sharing to those who are bound to them by the peculiar ties which exist between a manufacturer and those who do his work and help him earn his wealth.

What men will not do from a sense of duty, enforced by a State policeman, they will gladly do when their own selfish interests are at stake, and from a spirit of brotherly interest. Once let the principle become established that the State owes us a living and we will become the greatest nation of shirks and pap-suckers ever known. But in Christian co-operation the manhood of the individual will

be preserved intact. We will join hands, not to get the most possible for the least expenditure of labor, and to become the puppets of so many political bosses, but for the mutual benefit and the welfare of all. The one is slavery even though the State be the master, the other is true Christianity, complete and far-reaching to be sure, and yet logically perfect. We will be one family in every human interest, and yet every man will be free and complete within himself.

While these problems of the industrial world may not be strictly within the province of the church, surely the right solution of them can be promoted by it. At least let it not be said that the Christian religion offers no encouragement to the workingman in his outlook toward the future. For when we help the workingman in the hard problems of his daily life, we shall also win his heart.

An Open Door.

A remarkable opportunity for the aroused activities of a determined church is found in the social life of the people. The average community in city or country is a social sub-cellar where inertia and indifference have settled down upon the people like a deadening pall. A few active ones, including a majority of the young people, perhaps, manage to get some social enjoyment in ways that may be wholesome or not according to the moral tendencies of those who take the lead. But even where social activity is the greatest, and its tendencies are the most wholesome, there are many who are left outside of its kindly influences.

In every community, since the church, except for its mob socials and its prayer-meetings, has abdicated its mission as a social reorganizer, Satan has a wide opportunity to exert his influence upon the social activities of the people. But his richest harvest field is the community which is socially

dead. There are both social and sexual instincts in human nature which cannot be ignored. Given their logical field for wholesome development, they tend only to beneficent results. The very existence of the race depends upon them. But repressed and compelled to hide in the cellar-like dankness of dark corners, that which should be love and kindly friendship becomes passion, life becomes death, hope and joy become despair. Because the church refuses to have anything to do with the social life of the people, and confines its influence upon it to fierce denunciations of the ordinary social pleasures, the very evils which it most deeply deplores flourish like potato sprouts in a damp, neglected cellar.

This is but the dark, dank side of the social question. Every community, because of the neglect of its good people, is not left to feed the bawdy houses of this Christian age of the world, but every community has its damp, dark corners into which Christian love and care seldom penetrate. Even in its more wholesome aspects, our social life needs the earnest thought and vigilant care of those who are jealous for the highest Christian culture and anxious for the moral advancement of the world. As the church hopes to win society for Christ, it should certainly be ready to improve every opportunity to enter into the world's social life in a very direct and positive way.

Wherever the social instincts of the people have been neglected and repressed it will surely find a ready welcome waiting for it. It may go wherever it will if it only goes with blessings in its hands, and in the name of Christ. And yet it has been said that no way has ever yet been found for reaching the masses of the people, unless it is with bass drums and tambourines! Our word religion is supposed to save us for a future Heaven, but it cannot save us and our neighbors, and our neighbors' children, from the dullness and the dangers and temptation of a perverted social life.

The social world, if we only had the wit to see it, is our most important and promising mission field. The church of Christ is to-day the only avowed moral agency in the world. The State represses crime, it does not prevent it, or even discourage it, except through the fear of punishment. The homes of the people may be either moral or base. Up to the point of the open commission of crime they stand above the law. A man is king within his own home, whether he be saint or demon. Civilization has a very positive moral tendency, and our school system and our benevolent orders all have a moral bearing; but the church alone is supposed to occupy the whole field of morals, and to be responsible for the moral training of the people. At least the field is left to it alone. If it does not watch over the social surroundings of our young people and see that they are wholesome and fully adequate to their demands, no one else but Satan will. As God's representative on earth, it has no more right to abdicate its mission in this respect than it has to allow the children in its Sunday schools to drift out of them into the saloons, or to blast the hopes of those who trust in it to save their children from at least the grosser temptations of life. With this duty plainly before it, the church should by no means content itself with indiscriminate denunciations of social pleasures. Those who criticise should also be prepared to suggest a better way, and if it is their duty to do this and they do not do it, their criticisms are worse than valueless; they are impudence.

Let it be known that the church enters the social field to promote neighborly kindness and to throw the safeguards of a wise oversight about the social life of our young people, and it would find all doors open and all hearts ready for any demands that might be made upon them. The social world belongs to the church in a very significant way, and it always has belonged to it, if it had only had the wit and the grace and the energy to enter into possession and trans-

form it in the name of Christ. It is only another instance of the blindness and the stupidity of those who would win the world for Christ, but who have only learned to preach and to pray. We criticise and denounce; we will not improve or even suggest a better way. We are word jugglers where action, and only action, is demanded. The world is ours, but we blindly cast aside our opportunities and go on in our happy-go-lucky way to a dogmatic Heaven. We praise God, but we have never learned to serve him. We pray, but we have never learned what true prayer is. We have faith, but it is an exhortation to be relieved from any human service, and a dead load upon our shoulders, spiritually, weighting us down to the earth when, by means of it, we should be winning the world. With a living God and a living Christ we have nothing but a dead faith and a dead religion with which to represent him to mankind.

With a universe full of heavens, why should Christian people expect to find a single one?

Into Every Home.

It is a mistaken notion of Christian people that when they go proselyting they must carry a Bible under one arm and a hymn-book under the other. These have their uses, but under some circumstances they should be carried in the heart and not in the hands.

The longest way around is often the shortest way home to one's object. To carry Christianity to people in their homes is a far easier way of reaching their hearts than to throw religion at them from over the pulpit, or talk it over the children's heads in the Sunday school room, in the hope that in some haphazard way hearts may be reached and souls saved.

To preach the gospel of salvation to a man who will not come into our churches and who objects to being bom-

barded with religious talk upon the street it is necessary to get into his home. In no other way can we fulfill the imperative gospel command to carry the gospel to his very heart and to disciple him for Christ. As the command is an imperative one to the true Christian, and, as a man's home is his castle, we have no other resource. The battleground of the home must be won or our cause is lost.

Since a man's home is his castle, he has clearly both the moral and the legal right to dictate terms of entrance, and we must go, if we go at all, upon terms that will be both pleasant and acceptable to him. This, then is the question before the church. How can Christian people enter the homes of those not Christians, in a way that will be both agreeable and acceptable to them, and yet uphold and advance the cause which the church represents? How can we carry the gospel of a real salvation to men wherever we find them, and actually win them for the truth and for our God?

Pastoral visitation is clearly not sufficient. It does not go far enough, and the proselyting tongs are usually too painfully apparent. District visitation is just as bad, and it too often savors of charity or of condescension. We may not be sent into the street, but the spirit of welcome is just as surely lacking as though we were. A prayer-meeting makes too apparent the churchly method of saving men, and, as this method has failed in the church, there are no good reasons why it should succeed better in the home. A church social is utterly out of the question in most instances, and it has little or no religious bearing, even at its best. In all these conventional means far getting into the homes of the people the spirit of neighborly kindness and friendly interest is lacking, and they fail, as perhaps they deserve to fail. They have neither been inspired by Heaven nor by the Christian spirit within our own hearts. New ways must evidently be devised or we shall still fail. What shall these new ways be?

The Neighborhood Club.

Just here comes both the plain mission and the opportunity of the church. To promote neighborly love and sympathy is surely the larger half of the duty of the church, for while we may love our neighbors without loving God, we cannot love God without loving our neighbors also. Christianity is not divisible in that way. The love of neighbor is the only proof we have to show that we really love God. Profession, alone, will not suffice.

The neighborhood club, formed of a few congenial families, and with the church or some Christian organization having general supervision over the different clubs and their work, will find an open field waiting for it in most communities. If, with the purely social aspects of the club, are united objects that will tend to benefit the home in every way, and help to solve the many home problems that go unsolved for lack of thought or of friendly co-operation among those interested, there is no reason why it should not find a welcome in every home except those of the vicious and the base. It will be Christianity applied to a practical purpose and brought home to the very hearts of the people.

Just the kind of an organization that shall best serve the purposes of these clubs must be largely left for circumstances to determine, but the need of a strong central organization to look after the interests of the individual clubs and keep them up to the highest point of efficiency, will be apparent. If the church should undertake this special work it would probably be wise to do it through a parallel organization to be called the Christian League, perhaps, and having its distinct officers and a well-defined field of work. Membership in the clubs cannot imply membership in the church, of course, but it can carry with it membership in the league, and a voice in the management of its affairs.

The aims of such a league of clubs should be as broad as the needs of humanity; its scope as wide as humanity itself. Much of our moral energy is frittered away in organizations devoted to one special purpose. Let it be understood that all these purposes and many others, if they tend toward the welfare of humanity, are either provided for in this organization, or promoted by it. As to membership, not one family should be forgotten or neglected, although all may not be persuaded at once to become members of the clubs. If they have special needs surely that is a special reason why the influences of Christian love and charity should be extended to them.

With this club idea and the Christian league as a nucleus almost everything desirable becomes easily possible. Auxiliary clubs for special purposes, such as mother's clubs, etiquette clubs, educational and training clubs, and others which may be found useful, can be organized as their need and value become apparent. Insurance, wholesale methods of living, the finding of congenial employment for all, and the providing of means and methods for a broader education among young people, are some of the larger advantages which may be added through the co-operation of affiliated leagues. Whatever is of value to a community or to mankind in the larger aggregate, can easily be obtained when men act together in a spirit of mutual helpfulness and Christian sympathy. If there is a millennium of peace and happiness in store for men there is no reason why they should not have it now, if they will accept it in this spirit, instead of waiting for it until some far-distant era of the world's history.

It may be urged that this is social economics and no part of the work of the church, but the objection will not be well taken. Just this and nothing else is Christianity. If the church has no interest in the welfare of humanity, if its mission is not to bring peace and happiness to the world, it

has no business to try to proselyte men to a religion which it may have deduced from some portion of the Bible, but from which Christianity has been left out. Worship of God and the hope of a future salvation are the most glorious truths of our religion, but each is valueless unless it springs from the true Christian spirit within our own hearts. It is folly to suppose that God can be pleased with the worship and the professions of a religion from which the most important part has been omitted. We must love our fellow men or our religion is vain and valueless to the world, and equally valueless to ourselves. Has God provided a glorious home in Heaven for those who shirk their Christian duties and hope to win eternal bliss in exchange for a few prayers and doles of charity?

The plea may be made that this work of reaching the homes and the hearts of the people should not be placed upon the church or upon the already overworked minister. The object is a good one, and one that will promote the efficiency of church work, but if anything is to be attempted in this direction, why not organize a club in applied Christianity, outside of the church, and talk it over?

We have too many talking clubs for moral purposes already, and perhaps the church is the greatest one of all. What is imperatively needed is a working club as large as the church is now, or may become, which will enter into the active work of redeeming the world and give vitality to the religion which the church now upholds. The imperative duty before the church is not that prayer and church worship shall be maintained, but that humanity shall be reached and won for the better life and for Christ. All other considerations must give way to this or else the church has reached the limit of its mission and is of little farther use to the world. If there is any other way of accomplishing the work except by entering upon it in the name of Christ and with the inspiration that Heaven has already given to us,

or will give us if we will take it, by all means let it be found and entered upon at once. If Christianity can be talked into people; if a word religion and prayers of faith, or unfaith, can save mankind from the tangible evils of the present life and give them the assurance of a future Heaven, let a time limit be established and the evangelization of our communities be made upon this basis and the people brought into the church at once. Perhaps we shall learn then what to do with them to make them Christians in fact as well as in name. But if Heaven does not answer our prayers and men will not accept the modern aspect of our Christianity, why should our emotional methods of winning men be continued in a fitful way in the hope that another eighteen hundred years will see the world really saved? Are human souls of so little account that the loss of billions can be contemplated with complacency in a stubborn adherence to an illogical and unsuccessful method of evangelizing the world?

How Organized.

Fortunately for the active work of completing the evangelization of our communities, Christian people are not huddled together in particular neighborhoods, and this fact makes the organization of neighborhood clubs and the general work of reaching people in their homes, easily possible. Christians have only to step outside their own doors to find their work already laid out for them, and easy for accomplishment, because they know, or should know, the neighbors by whom they are surrounded.

One of the first steps in this aggressive work of world redemption should be the preparation of a very full and complete gospel census of each community. This census should contain all facts obtainable that will aid in any way in making the work of reaching people and influencing them more successful. With this census as a basis, the work

can easily be outlined in a tentative way and the membership of the different clubs partly determined upon. The work of making the plan and its benefits known will be an easy matter, and preliminary meetings can then be held for organization. In these meetings the very best talent of the church should be utilized in starting the work upon just the right basis and with a general uniformity in each of the clubs. Naturally there will be enough Christian people in each club to give the work proper direction and to maintain the objects for which it was organized.

Until these objects are clearly understood and their benefits apparent, perhaps it would be better not to try to extend the membership too far or to attempt too much. A few families in each community can be made the nucleus for the work, and it can then be extended by the principle of accretion or of division until, in its enlarged scope, all the objects of the organization shall be fully accomplished.

People of special talents should have special parts in the work assigned to them, and these talents may perhaps be needed in more than one club. Indeed, membership in more than one club may be found desirable for many who desire greater social opportunities, or who may in this way be able to promote the work. In any case, visiting between clubs should be promoted as far as may seem consistent or best.

While the ultimate objects of the league should be as broad as the needs of humanity itself, some special objects must be made prominent upon the start. Foremost among these should be the development of the social spirit among men. Friends do not bicker and fight, and gossip about each other. It is only those who live upon opposite sides of the fence of social distinction or of unneighborly non-intercourse, who make faces at each other through the cracks and try to spy out each other's shortcomings. Of course the social spirit must also be made a Christian spirit or many of the good influences of the work will be destroyed.

The work of interesting young people and imparting to them broader ideas of the significance of life and the untold value of the opportunities that life offers to those who will accept them, should be made very prominent. "The very best destiny for all," should be made one of the prominent working mottoes of the league. The children, too, must not be forgotten. Here, also, must be called into play the best talent and the keenest wit of Christian people. How to win the young people for the better destiny and for Christ, is a problem by itself, and it must be solved! Who will say that the wisdom of the church is incapable of solving it when this has once been set to work? Prayer will help us in this, as it does in every sincere work we undertake for God, but the folly of prayer that ends in forgetfulness, and of an implicit trust that Heaven will take the work out of our hands and do it for us while we dream, is too manifest to need further illustration. It is not folly alone; it is a crime against those we love the most. And yet outside of the Sunday school, this has been the real limit and measure of the Christian work we have done for the young people of the land, until they took the work of saving themselves into their own hands. And now, since the organization of the Endeavor movement we fold our hands the more tightly and doubtless flatter ourselves that there is nothing more for us to do.

The Matter of Entertainment.

When people are brought together in any capacity the question of appropriate entertainment must not be forgotten, and this is especially true where those assembled have not been trained in the art of entertaining themselves or one another.

In the proposed neighborhood club this question will be a very prominent one if the plan is to be made uniformly

successful. While there will be many things to interest the members in the usual order of work, and simple social intercourse may justly occupy a very prominent place in the meetings, these will not suffice at all times, and young people, especially, will demand something more in the way of lively entertainment. A politician would never be guilty of calling people together in a political meeting and leave them to entertain themselves, and yet just this is what too often happens when people are called together in a social way in the name of religion.

Nothing should be done, of course, that will impinge upon the conscientious scruples of any, and yet it is a pity that Satan should have been allowed to claim exclusive rights in many of the pleasant things of life. There is nothing that has more of the elements of quiet enjoyment in it than a pack of cards. If the distinction could be made sharp between their wholesome use and their abuse there seems to be no very good reason why they should not be used as a means of lighter entertainment in gatherings where nothing else can be found to take their place. But while the tendency of the times is toward liberality in all these things, the time has probably not yet come when card playing and dancing, even if strictly confined within proper limits, can be introduced in gatherings avowedly Christian in their character. Nevertheless there is a strong obligation upon the church to amend its standards of propriety upon all these points, and not be satisfied with wholesale and indiscriminate denunciations of social pleasures. Man was created a laughing animal, and he is the only animal that laughs. Perhaps there is a deep lesson in this for Christian people to study.

The topic is introduced to show how necessary it is that the problem should be met in a spirit of reason and solved in the right manner. Heaven will not solve it for us; neither will Heaven smile upon our efforts to override

nature and satisfy our young people with nothing but a prayer-meeting or a mercenary church social, when their very natures demand hearty enjoyment that will not conflict with Christian experience, or be made a sin by churchly edict. We may say that the church has nothing to do with the social life or the pleasures of mankind, except to criticise and condemn, but in this we fatally limit the field of church influence and cause it, to this extent, to abdicate its mission in the world. The church is in the world to redeem it in every respect, socially as well as spiritually, and not to dodge troublesome or unwelcome issues.

But whatever is done in the way of entertainment the absurd fashion of feeding people at an evening gathering of any kind, should be abandoned. The gathering should be made as simple and as devoid of trouble or expense to those who act as hosts, as possible. And yet, if it is thought desirable, social or picnic teas, given at the general expense, might be made a pleasant feature, and thus the whole evening be gained for social enjoyment and good fellowship. There is a wide field for ingenious planning to make these clubs just what the people want and need in every respect, and still firmly uphold the Christian principle.

These are but the simplest suggestions. The actual work of maintaining the clubs and making them interesting, must be wrought out in actual experience in each individual case. All these matters should be placed in the charge of those best fitted to look after them and to bring them to a successful issue. With the determination that the work shall be done, and done right, it can be done; and in the doing people will both gain experience and find their reward.

What shall These Men Do?

A serious problem before an aroused church will be the right use and direction of the energies of Christian people when these energies shall have been consecrated to the new work that will need to be done. The ultimate objects to be attained are evident to all, but the detailed methods of reaching these objects are not so clearly apparent.

The problem of utilizing Christian activity is not a new one by any means. But under an order of things where worship and "being good" has been made to take the place of active Christian service, the problem, like many another one equally serious, has been given up and matters allowed to drift everywhither. Even the young converts, eager to show their love for God in honest service for mankind, have virtually been told to twirl their thumbs and pray. Aimless prayer and a barren faith may suffice for the emotional, and for those so thoroughly converted that they cannot backslide into complete indifference, but for the practical and for those who lightly take upon themselves the vows of God, something more is needed. These soon discover the barrenness of a formal or an emotional church service, and either give up religion altogether or become formal or indifferent Christians. Second cousins to the church they might be called, if there were a living church for them to be related to. Even in the Sunday school work Christian young men are allowed to drift out with the tide of the overgrown boy, because there is so very little for them to do. The world is to be saved, but nobody, apparently, is wanted to help save it. And nineteen young men out of twenty, finding nothing to do in the modern church, fail to become identified with it in any way.

Is this an overdrawn picture of the use that is usually made of the thought and energy of Christian people? I would that it were. I would that this century had never

grown so old before it could be discovered that in spiritual things people die from sloth, as in material life they die from suffocation when they have no air. I would that some portion of the nineteen young men allowed to drift away from the church had been reclaimed before nineteen-twentieths of the century had been wasted and lost!

What shall these men, the young men among the rest, do in the awakened church? It is a fair question and one that must be answered. If the wit of the church can find no way in which to develop and utilize the energies of its membership, the problem of the young men and the church will still remain unsolved. And we might say the problem of the old men and the church, as well. We shall die of inertia in the future as we have in the past. The church bell will call us to worship, but no bell will be found large enough, or with tones sufficiently penetrating, to call us into the path of duty, or tell to the world that we have really found a religion that is well worthy of their enthusiastic support and glad allegiance. The century bells of 1901 will ring, not upon a world or a nation redeemed, but one still lost; their muffled tones will tell of opportunities wasted and a cause discredited and disdained of men.

There will evidently be a much larger field for active and intelligent effort when the church shall enter upon a conquest of the homes and the hearts of the people, than there is now. The very attempt to reach men that the church bell has not yet found and converted, and to convince them of their duty, will set millions of minds actively at work devising ways of extending the Christian influence to these forgotten homes. We will not go to church to pray for miracles alone; we will go there to plan for them, and when our hearts are warm with the glow of an honest love for our fellow men, we may be very sure that Christian young men will catch the enthusiasm and carry its influence to still other hearts. The chill of inaction kills; but the

heart-fire of enthusiasm is sure to spread and to nerve men for any sacrifice or for any duty.

The semi-benevolent enterprises of the new movement, carrying out more fully the idea of mutual help and Christian service among men, will furnish a wide field for the energies of many. The enlarged activities of the church in every direction, the use of earnest young men who can lead, in the place of young ladies who simply charm, as teachers of boys' classes, the winning of the "big boy" generally, the concomitant organizations that may be started to provide for the enlarged scope of Christian effort; will provide work for many. But it must not be forgotten that the organization of all these forces and their wise management will still call for the deepest thought and the most careful planning upon the part of those who hold the destinies of the church in their charge. The idea that nothing but a prayer for heavenly guidance is necessary, and that Heaven will then not only guide, but do all the work that Christians ought to do, must be sharply and decisively uprooted in men's minds. The most zealous prayer for inspiration and then forgetfulness, will not suffice. Heaven inspires the active mind and guides the willing feet. It can do nothing with a signboard Christian.

What shall the City Man Do?

Different communities will have different problems to meet and solve. A country community where the people are largely homogeneous, is widely different from a city community where the strata of social distinction run from the highest to the very lowest. The city is, in fact, a world in epitome, and has world problems of its own.

But it must be remembered that the sharpest intellects are also to be found in our cities, and if they have not wit enough to solve these special problems of bringing the

highest and the lowest together in a community of Christian feeling and fellowship, if not of goods and chattels, it is time that they were exercised in Christian ethics until they are sharper. The idea that in spiritual things Heaven furnishes the intellect and the energy while the church furnishes nothing but the prayers, should have been abandoned centuries ago. The book of human experience proves it false.

In the business world whatever is considered desirable or necessary is sooner or later accomplished. Fortunately for the existence of the race we have not been taught that Heaven furnishes the food and that we have only to hold our mouths open. It is only in our Christian service that we are so ready to take the text of Scripture to pervert its real meaning, and lie down in helplessness before every serious problem, imploring Heaven to do our thinking and acting for us. We have strong men in our churches, those able to grasp the machinery of custom and hold on to it by might and main until its barren purpose is accomplished; they are even able by their strong personality to impart some motion to it and permanently increase its efficiency; but they are babes before every new problem in ethics or in morals. A Vincent or a Talmage can thrill the hearts of the people and inspire them to loftier aspirations, but they cannot tell their followers how to reach the masses of the people; how to redeem the child-life of the world; how to make saloons superfluous; how to introduce an honest Christian brotherhood among men; how to win young men and interest them in the work of the Christian church; how to solve the labor problem, or how to worship an offended God in a manner that will be acceptable to him. They are simply machine-made leaders and they uphold a machine-made Christianity. Be good, and acknowledge your duty toward God, whether you do it toward man or not, is the essence of the religion they impart to the people. And to this may be added, perhaps, pay the preacher.

How would it do to stop paying the preacher for a while and flounder along without his help until we have found a religion that cannot be imparted by word of mouth, and one that can be made applicable even to our cities? Our ministers are kindly and well-meaning gentlemen, but it is to be feared that in some instances they are teaching us the traditions of men in the place of a genuine Christianity, and a gospel of words in the place of the living gospel of salvation. Will a religion of "being good" and doing nothing, ever save the world?

The city Christian, like the country one, must learn to save his neighbor, and Heaven will not tell him how unless he really wishes to know.

Suggestions.

The idea should not obtain that the neighborhood club is simply an organization for social pleasure. With the mark and motto, "The very best destiny for all," it should be essentially a working club, and if this mark is to be reached there will certainly be enough work to engage and interest all.

Two-thirds of the difference in men is the difference in environment and in their ambitions. The remainder may consist in what we call natural ability, but natural ability without either the wit or the energy to use it, is a poor gift. A foolish smart man had better be a fool outright. There would be less to mourn over in the waste of good material.

With thirty million parents having thirty million different views as to how children should be brought up or allowed to come up alone, it is little wonder that thirty million children and young people, more or less, should fail to find the right destiny. There is evidently a wide field here for the work of neighborhood clubs if they shall be able to promote right views upon this subject and upon a dozen other

subjects that might be mentioned. The story is told of a minister who was very earnest upon the subject of how children should be brought up until he had children of his own, and then he became suddenly mute. But surely the aggregated wisdom of our communities, if thoughtfully applied, can help in solving these puzzling problems that persistently enter into our social and into our home lives. At least we ought to be able to save our growing boys from the idiotic temptations of life, and to teach them better views of the significance of life and of its opportunities than they now seem to have.

What is said upon this one point applies with equal force to many others. It is full time we got out of our happy-go-lucky ideas of life and commenced to learn, if we can, what life really means to us. Here and there a man studying the problem can accomplish but little, but when all study these problems of right living and of happiness, temporal and eternal, wisdom and good sense will stand by every man's door, waiting for admittance if he really likes their company.

In communities where economy is one of the most important of the graces, and the art of making refractory ends meet is one that many people are compelled to study, a few suggestions for plans for mutual helpfulness along material lines, may not be out of place.

A clothing loan fund may be found an excellent thing in many communities. Those whose incomes are limited often find it difficult to keep a large family neatly clothed at all times and ready for school or Sunday school. Clothes will wear out at unexpected times and usually when the family income has just been expended in other ways. The natural result is that children are kept at home because they are poorly dressed when a little accommodation would enable them to tide over these rocky places. If this fund could be supplemented by wholesale purchases of material and a sew-

ing bee now and then, many would be able to take advantage of it without the feeling that they were asking for an accommodation. It will be seen at once, with a little thought, that the principle of "helping one another to help all," is capable of indefinite extension.

An insurance fund for extending the benefits of at least partial life insurance to all, is something well worthy of thought and attention. That we should leave to many women the prospect of a washtub as her destiny, if her husband should die, is a poor way of making manifest that neighborly love which the gospel so imperatively demands of us. And with a little wit and mutual thoughtfulness this problem, as well as many others, can be solved.

An educational fund for those who desire larger educational facilities than their parents can give them, would surely promote ambition and lead to excellent results. Indeed the field for practical "otherism," sometimes called Christianity, is a very wide one. Once let the spirit of mutual helpfulness become a ruling one in Christian hearts and there will be plenty of opportunity for its development. "Bear ye one another's burdens," has been one of the most reasonable demands of our religion for many centuries, and it is strange that so few have even tried to put it into actual practice. But now let us hope that "otherism" will become the ruling passion in many Christian hearts.

Applied Christianity.

The Christian League, or some organization for Christian work in all its departments, could well be adopted in connection with every church, even where neighborhood clubs for promoting social intercourse and Christian fellowship do not seem to be demanded. At least every church and every community should be united in some definite way with every other church and community, in a decisive forward

movement along the lines of Christian activity. In some way or other the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, should be gotten face to face, if not arm in arm, and taught that they have a common human interest that cannot be satisfied with fire-tongs sympathy or a contribution-box love.

There are deep problems in human relationships and in human living that cry out to Christian people for solution because in their solution lie the moral and social welfare of the race. The modern Christian is far too ready to put his hand in his pocket rather than in his needy neighbor's palm, and to stand one side and denounce social evils and deplore their sad results, when he should be undermining them by positive, antagonistic Christian influences. Heedless charity kills manhood, and thoughtless denunciation only breeds contempt. We must help our needy fellow being if we are Christians, but how to help him effectively and permanently is a question that the church as a practical Christian organization must solve. It is also imperatively demanded that it should solve the problem of making our communities safe dwelling places for the young manhood of the race. And Christian men can solve these problems and all others connected with the welfare and happiness of mankind, when they are once ready and willing to set their wits to work.

They can solve them by promoting a more sensible social sentiment than that which prevails among men to-day. The present stress of human life is not in the direction of helping one another or in making the world better, but in emulating one another in ostentatious display. Each one is striving to be equal to or a little beyond his neighbors in everything pertaining to the outward appearance. Money is the real god we worship, whether we have little of it or much, because money enables us to shine with, or to out-shine our neighbors. And when we get it our first thought is never as to how much good can be accomplished by it, but how we can spend it to the best advantage upon our-

selves or lay it safely up to spend at some future time, or, perchance, to deaden our children's lives and ambitions by means of it.

Nineteen men out of twenty are doubtless spending every penny of their income as soon as they get it, in an insane rush to be as near to the head of the social procession as they can get, and nineteen-twentieths of this income is spent upon themselves. The other twentieth may or may not go toward paying the preacher and for charitable purposes; but if it does, there is a certain selfishness, even in the spending of that. Under these circumstances it is clearly the duty of wealthy Christian men to turn back from the head of this procession and try to find some medium ground of modest luxury which the majority of their Christian brethren can enjoy with them, and which might be a mark of emulation to others, but not a snare. If, by a wise investment of their wealth, they can put modest luxury easily within the reach of the majority of their less fortunate fellow beings, they would only be following along the line of Christian helpfulness and love.

Christian people can solve these problems by thoughtful study upon all social topics, and by concerted action in the promotion of all good tendencies and the sharp discouragement of evil ones. They can solve them by honest efforts which may tend to equalize the burdens of mankind without any loss of individual character or responsibility. They can solve them by broadening the human outlook in every possible direction, and by an honest, thoughtful service in behalf of their fellow men.

That the Christian church can solve all these problems if it really wishes to solve them, is simple truth. Whatever an organization as large as the church desires to do, can be done. It is folly to say that from ten to twenty million Christian people in these United States of America are powerless before every moral problem and can do nothing but

tamely submit to every adverse circumstance and dodge every vexatious issue, simply because the powers of evil are too great for them to combat and the bondage of past customs too strong to be broken. But if they do not want to solve these problems that God has placed before them for solution; if they are perfectly well satisfied to make Christianity a Sunday recreation or a religious fad, the love of God a cheap aspiration, and the love of humanity a penny dole to enable them to escape a beggar or an unwelcome moral issue, then they will not be solved in this century, and perhaps never. Satan will still continue to rule the earth as he rules it to-day. The century bells of 1901 will ring out upon a land that in every material aspect is a hundred times farther advanced than when the century commenced, but upon a church that, morally and spiritually, is as dead as Julius Caesar. And it is to be feared that people will learn to say that Jesus of Nazareth is as dead as he, simply because his disciples are lifeless also.

The destinies of the world are in the hands of the people of God; but where are the people of God? Let the roll be called and a new mustering made for these redemption years of the church and of the world. And if a living church cannot be found, why continue the farce of maintaining a dead one?

The Ultimate Man.

The immediate duty of the church, when it has once amended its Christianity, is to get after the ultimate man, and to lay hold of the ultimate child, holding on to the latter for dear life—the life of the church and of the child both. When one child has broken away from the influence of the church and is lost, ruin stares the church in the face. It is only by indefinite repetitions of this one failure that the world is lost to it and its mission becomes worse than a failure; an abject yielding to defeat and taking it as a matter of course.

A public speaker, if he is wise, invariably addresses himself to the most distant person in his audience. With sufficient lung power to reach and convince the farthest listener, it would be foolish for him to whisper his speech to those upon the front seats and leave the rest of his audience to retire in disgust.

Our illustration is lame in one particular. The speaker who succeeds in reaching the most distant listener may be quite sure that all others can hear him, but to reach the ultimate man with the Christian influence requires something more than a journey to the slums and a prayer-meeting held in somebody's behalf. The Christian influence travels from heart to heart and the ultimate man cannot be reached until all others are. Nevertheless a journey to the slums might be an excellent idea if it gives Christian people a point of advantage from which they can work back until the lines of influence are all connected up and every home in living communication with the house of God.

There is one important advantage in real Christian work in our cities. The slums are seldom very far from the palaces and it does not require very much wire to reach from one to the other. The man in the office or in his factory, if he is a Christian, can reach out with the touch of human sympathy to the hands of many who are closely related to him, and the man's wife, if she is so minded, can learn how these people live and prove to them that she does not intend to claim as her inborn right a seat in the boxes or the dress circles of Heaven.

Cut and dried methods of reaching the ultimate man and saving, beyond a peradventure, the ultimate child, cannot be laid down in a book, and if they could, they would be useless if followed in a cut and dried fashion. The cut and the dried has been the bane of the church in all generations. If Christian men will not use their wits in Christian work the world will still remain lost, for even Heaven cannot

direct an army of signboards and win victories with them. The only infallible direction that can be given is to go to work with a definite purpose and to use one's wits to the best advantage possible, never daring to ask Heaven to bless one's efforts until at least one effort has been made. If that effort, undertaken in the fear of God, is a failure, it will be full time to ask Heaven to show one a better way, and even then one should be sure that the way is not under one's feet and that he should look down instead of looking up. There is a cant in calling upon Heaven at wrong times and under wrong circumstances, and making that the end of all effort, that is as bad as professing what one does not believe.

Does this practical idea of Christian work destroy faith and true worship? By no means. No more than charging upon the enemy's breastworks with a determination to win a victory or die in the attempt, destroys patriotism in the true soldier. It is the stragglers who are in danger of losing their patriotism and the best lesson for them would be to persuade them to take their place beside the true soldier and learn patriotism from his spirit of devotion. In the name of Christ—do what? Stand still and pray? By no means! March forward, praying as we go!

Can the ultimate man in each community in our land be found and influenced for good in this present year, or within this century? It is arrant folly to declare that he cannot, if the right measures are adopted to find him and move his heart. Then why do Christian people fancy that God does not want the world converted for a thousand years to come, and tremble lest they should anticipate God's purposes by a few hundred years?

The Time Required.

How soon can the whole civilized world be organized upon some basis that really represents the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God? Within what time can

the church really enter upon the work of saving men, not by a word salvation in our churches, but by a heart salvation in their own homes?

If it were a matter of fashion in bonnets and dresses it would spread over the feminine civilized world in about three months. If it were a political campaign it could be accomplished in two, and then men would complain that their business had been interfered with for an unnecessary length of time. If it were a bit of highly important news it would be in everybody's mouth from San Francisco to St. Petersburg in about a day and a half. But being a matter of life and death to many, and of eternal happiness to all, a year or more will doubtless be necessary in which to arouse the energies of Christian people the world over and teach them that mankind can really be won, and that a real Christianity will save people from their sins and their miseries whenever and wherever it can be intelligently applied.

Will the year 1896 witness a decided forward movement along these lines, or equally promising ones, in every church and every community in our own land? Can the church be brought to a sharp realization of its duty and persuaded to actually enter upon it within twelve months' time? Or will it still insist upon making God the scapegoat of its shortcomings and declare that the time has not yet come, the world cannot yet be saved, the church has never yet been inspired to do anything but to preach a word salvation and to worship an offended God?

Can men be ever led to think? Will they always insist upon making Christianity a religion of form and emotion? Will they ever forget the eternal interests of mankind, the salvation of their own neighbors and friends, the soul interests of their own children, in a striving after a form of worship or a statement of belief, rather than in a search for the souls of men? Will they forever pervert the imperative "Go!" of the gospel into the indolent "Come," of modern Christianity?

What power in earth or Heaven can arouse the human sympathy in men's breasts and lead them to band together as soldiers of Christ, for the redemption of our communities and of the world? Must we be guided by every other selfish interest but that which would make of this world a paradise, and of mankind a glorious brotherhood? Will men even reject the love of God, so patiently held out to them, and in their selfish egotism, hold themselves above their Creator and his commands? Where words so sadly fail to express the deep significance of the opportunity and the duty of the church in these epoch-making years of the world's history, how can one be sure that words alone can reach and influence the hearts of those who love their God, though blindly, but who have never yet felt the thrill of enthusiasm that can be found in honest and earnest service for one's fellow men? Can Christian men be stirred to zealous service in humanity's cause? Who, among the Christian people of this country, will say that America, God's chosen people of modern times, can and shall be redeemed within the next five years? In a call for earnest Christian soldiers, who will really enlist for God and for humanity, and be ready to march forward to certain victory?

If America cannot be redeemed now, in these momentous years of the most remarkable of all the centuries, when shall it ever be redeemed. Must we sadly admit that this generation is incapable of being stirred to a heroic purpose, even when it has an opportunity to redeem the unworthy past, and to inaugurate a new century which may be made to mean great things for the world and for humanity? Must Christian sympathy and progress lag behind every other interest the world contains? Must we still sit dreaming in our churches while the world is lost?

BOOK IV.

THE TALE OF THE CENTURY BELLS.

A Turning Point in Thought.

In these latter days of the nineteenth century we have certainly come to a meeting and a parting of the ways. Men will no longer accept the old and the outgrown, and there is little reason why they should. The past, with all its blunders and its deficiencies, is dead. We live in the living present with its new standards of thought and laws of evidence, and these tell us that form is not religion, and that worship, without service for humanity, is not Christianity. But truth has not been overthrown, or even assailed. We simply push aside the veil that dimmed our vision and behold the truth itself in all its beauty and completeness. And seeing it thus for the first time and realizing that it speaks to us not only as a vision of beauty but with a voice of duty, we accept it gladly and make it the foundation of our lives.

Neither has any one discovered a new religion. God-love and human sympathy run like a golden cord through every book and chapter of revelation. We have been blind to think that we could divorce the strands and forget the weakest of our fellow men while we worship God in costly churches. The madness of the dark ages made of religion an instrument of torture; the blindness of the present age has placed a man-made gospel in the place of the human love and sympathy embodied in the very life and character of Christ, and has made the very name of religion a stumbling block in the way of many. But through it all the name of Christ has stood for better things, and to-day is

made a test to prove the false and the true. The Christian man is known and read of all, and the world finds no fault in him. And in the new crusade for man's salvation he will not lag or flinch.

For even earnest Christian men must clearly realize that the old era of inaction and a negative example is past and gone never to return. It is no longer sufficient to love God and honor him, and to seek to guard one's own household from the temptations of a neglected and half-forgotten world. The era of decisive action, when Christian men must claim the world for Christ and win it for him, has come.

In every contest a decisive point occurs when those who strive must either go forward or turn back. And that point in the history of the moral world is now upon us. It is folly for us to declare that we have only to continue in the old ways, beseeching men to accept our aimless, negative religion, and that some time or other God will convert the whole world and teach the true Christianity to men. Looking back upon eighteen centuries of defeat the Christian man who fails to realize that continued stagnation is retrogression; that a negative religion cannot cope with positive evil, and, being less than it should be, is even a crime against God and against men, is a poor representative of the progressive spirit of the age. If our modern Christianity lacks anything of completeness; if human sympathy has been cut out, and obedience to God means allegiance to dead forms and customs; if it means vain words or emotions in the place of thoughtful action, then it is a dead religion and these judgment years of the church should forever bury it out of sight. Between the false and the true we cannot hesitate. Never let the name of religion be allowed to bolster up error or stagnation. Christianity is action. It is not death or slumber.

The Alternative.

The testing years of the church have evidently come. The centuries can teach us nothing unless they show to us that men, and organizations as well, have an accounting time with the world and with their God. Centuries have passed unheeded and in the ignorance and thoughtlessness of mankind the church of Christ has been enabled to crowd the stress of its duty and the fulfillment of its mission from one generation to another, claiming in spirit, if not in words, that it was God's fault that the world was not saved. But now under the clear reasoning powers of a generation fully awake and able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and between duty and pretense, it must stand and prove its Christianity to be true and its professions honest, whether it will or not. The times demand that the accounting should be made whether the church is able or unable to meet the test.

Past centuries amount to nothing in this accounting. Whether well or wrongly improved we have nothing to do with them. We have but one to answer for, and we have no right to even compare it with the past and to boast that it is not quite so bad as the rest. We cannot even boast of the progress of our own century unless the work entrusted to us has been done. In the light of the present, and not of the past or the glowing visions of the future, how stands our account with God? Is the world redeemed? Is even our own country, which we point to as the most enlightened upon the face of the globe, subject to the King of kings? Is there one little community anywhere where God's reign is complete? Where is the man, even, who has learned to love his God with all his heart, soul, mind, strength, and who really loves his neighbor as himself? Has even he learned the full significance of the Heavenly mission to men? Counting Christians by this test, how many of them are there in the world to-day?

Shall two full millenniums from the birth of Christ be allowed to pass before the Christian church shall fulfill its mission to the world? Shall we enter upon this last of twenty centuries with not a single nation yet redeemed? The mustering time for the people of God is clearly at hand. If the record of the blackened, blotted centuries of the past is not to be repeated in the future, the roll must be called and those who are upon the Lord's side step forth for battle. Who, forgetting the past and its blunders and only remembering that he is an enlisted disciple of a living Christ, is ready to step out upon the side of right and truth and declare that a speedy conquest of the world is easily possible? Who stands by the errors, the false and mistaken faith, the thoughtlessness, the indolence, the failures of the past?

Upon the one side is victory and the salvation of mankind. No one can doubt but that the wit and energy of the world can save the world, if it is applied along the lines of the religion of love for God and for mankind which Christ gave to us. A word religion, and one from which the human love has been left out, will not do, and no one should be so blind as to suppose it will. But with a perfect and a complete Christianity, the victory is sure. By the power of God, claimed and used by Christian men, the world will be redeemed, and that speedily.

Upon the other side will be continued defeat. If nineteen centuries have not been sufficient in which to convert one single nation to a religion of words and professions only, surely another of like character will not be sufficient in which to persuade the whole world to become subject to it. When fifteen centuries of defeat have taught us the inadequacy of our perverted religion, why blunder along through another century in trying to prove that the world will eventually become subject to it? Millions of men have been saved and forgiven at God's altars and from them have gone out into the world to drift back again into indifference and

to show how little true religion an indolent church was able to teach them. They have learned of the love of God and have enjoyed it for one brief hour, but they have never learned the power and value of a genuine human sympathy. They love their neighbors after a fashion, perhaps, but still they have forgotten them and have left them to blunder along through misspent lives because the beauty and power of a true Christianity has never been made known to them. The church bell has rung in their ears, perhaps, but what can the church bell tell of the love of God and the worth of human sympathy and of earnest human service?

Upon the wrong side of this clear dividing line are the penitentiaries, saloons, and bawdy houses, the sweatshops, the palaces of the rich and the hovels of the poor, and, wherever the sound of the church bell penetrates, misery, want, despair, and the hard, crushing sense of human neglect; man against man, the rich, though Christians, against the poor, capital against labor and the strong against the weak, every one for himself and only Satan for the poor, tag-end crowds who have never been taught thrift or the science of living; this is the world as it is in this dot of time we call the year of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1896. This is the tale that the lagging centuries have been writing, and now another chapter is almost complete and ready for the inspection of him who eighteen centuries and more ago taught Christians to pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Are we ready for the report? Are we ready to stand by it and say, "Our duty has been done. If there is any fault or failing it is thine, O Lord. If we have not found our neighbor and brought him to Thee, it is simply because we have not been inspired to do so." Can the Christian church stand before God and the world and make a report like this?

Upon the right side—but who can picture it? Hope, because men and Heaven bid us hope; joy, because we have

learned the true joy, that of loving and serving each other; peace, because if we cannot win it for ourselves our Christian brothers will; happiness, yes, happiness for all, and even heaven itself, for heaven begins where the true Christians dwell, and ends—never!

Is it worth our while to arouse ourselves from our flowery beds of ease and go out into the world to win it for Christ? Is it really worth our while to obey God and love our neighbor? Or must we say with the sluggard, it is of no use! Men are all devils and will not be reformed, ourselves the worst of all because having taken upon ourselves the obligations of Christian disciples we still refuse to do the will of our Master, or tell to the world the glad news of a salvation which can save men in this world, as well as in the world to come.

Can dogmatism save the world? Can lectures upon morality save it?

“Thy neighbor as thyself!” And yet we live in palaces, if we can build them, while our neighbors starve for the lack of moral help and sympathy, and sometimes for the very food we throw to the dogs!

Is Christian love and sympathy dead in the world or has it never yet existed? Was Christ the only lover of his fellow men?

Man Face to Face with God.

Let no man say that true worship is assailed in these too truthful words. Man face to face with God is ever upon hallowed ground. The emotions of his heart are not for critical ken, and he alone can tell the nature of his thoughts or the Heavenly message he may receive. An active, earnest church upon its knees when ways are dark or danger imminent, and when souls are athirst for Heavenly inspiration and guidance, is the sublimest picture that the hand of any mortal may portray. But an inactive church mumbling

its prayers and forgetting them ere the church doors are passed, mocking God with its lip service but not obeying him, is an anomaly, if not a farce. It is the effect of God's love upon our own hearts and the effect of this transformed love upon the world about us, that tells whether we really love God or not. The witness of our power with God is in the results which flow from our power over the hearts of men. The true Christian serves his God and wins victories in his name; the religious enthusiast may so far forget his duty to humanity that his enthusiasm will be wasted and his service will be a barren and useless one.

The charge of thoughtlessness and of inefficiency in our Christian service falls with crushing effect upon every one of us. We have forgotten humanity while we worshiped God. Not one is clear of the charge of blood guiltiness because of the loss of his brother's soul through his barren zeal or thoughtless neglect, but many of us have been blindly at fault. Millions of Christian people have followed the light they had, thinking that it was the full sunlight of God's truth and failing to observe how men's ideas and the traditions of the past had crept in to blind them to their duty. It is to these sincere but mistaken Christian people that the church must look for the zest and energy with which the work of the church will be pushed forward in these closing years of the century, until, under God, every community in our fair land may be shaken from end to end and regenerated even though it may not be wholly redeemed and saved.

The world waits for its salvation; an army many million strong has been enlisted to save it. Will any one be guilty of the blasphemy of declaring that God is not ready for this army to march forward? Will any one say that he can find no inspiration in earth or in Heaven which will allow him to unite with this army and march forward with it to victory.

Who Will Help?

Twice ten million human souls, in this country, are counted among those who honor God and have pledged themselves to serve him. The members of this grand army may not all be ready for the forward movement which must come very soon if these closing years of the century are to be made the redemption era for the misspent years of the past. They may not all be able to catch the spirit with which these record-making years should inspire them, or be ready to respond to the call of earnest people everywhere for a grand forward movement all along the line of moral endeavor. Some may even still be dreaming when the century bells ring out the old and take out of the hands of the men of the nineteenth century the destinies of the world, and of the church of Christ. And yet among these earnest men and women there must be millions who will listen to the call and repeat it, and who will gladly take up whatever duty may seem nearest and most pressing, and continue to persevere until the work shall be fully inaugurated and victory made certain.

The day of miracles is past because men can work them for themselves, if they will only use their wit and energy for that purpose. If the redemption of America within five years' time is a miracle, nothing is more certain than that it can be accomplished by the right use of the means which Heaven has placed in our hands. Will it actually require one, two, or five years time for twenty million men and women to search out the other thirty millions this country contains and persuade them to accept a Christianity that is self-evidently true, and to become subject to it?

The problem only needs to be stated to show how very simple and easy it is or may be made. The wonder is not that some sanguine soul should conceive the salvation of our country possible within this limited time, but that the

Christian people of the land should not have discovered how very easy the problem really was and have solved it years ago. And they would have solved it if earnest men had only been brave enough to have broken away from the restricted thought of the past ages of the world and have studied truth for its own sake, and not for the sake of maintaining the traditions of the church.

God has many faithful disciples upon the earth despite our apparent blindness and stupidity. The throb of human sympathy has entered into many a heart that first has been face to face with God and there learned the sweet significance of God's love to man. These heart throbs have been allowed to grow weaker and weaker under a church policy that ignored human love and service, and tried to make a miracle-religion out of one so plain and simple that its greatest exponent needs no commentator. But the spirit of sympathy and of unselfish service is still in every earnest heart and is ready to be awakened and to be made effective at the call of need or of duty.

It is only necessary for these men and women to return again to the experiences of that hour when God accepted the complete sacrifice of their lives and hearts and forgave their sins. From that experience and full surrender of every faculty and possession, they will be ready to go out into the world and really win it for Christ. The dual strand of their religion will be woven again and bound so firmly that nothing shall be able to part it again, or to teach men through them that God delights in a worship from which the principles of self-denial and obedience have been left out.

Nor is this a work for Christian people alone. It is a work for humanity and humanity itself must help and learn in this the spirit of human sympathy, if it cannot fulfill the higher call of obedience to God and of service for him. The parent must help save his child, the wife her husband, and

the child its parents. The workingman must help save his fellow workingman from the senseless vices of humanity which not only destroy thrift and manliness, but drag souls down to eternal death. Even the children must help, and more than older and wiser ones, perhaps, because they can find what Christian people have so often missed, an open way to the hearts of those who are away from God.

Indeed, in such a cause, who can refuse to help?

And Heaven will Help!

Do we limit or ignore the power of God when we strenuously insist that the human portion of the work of world redemption shall be done without further excuse or delay, and that the benefits that may come from it may be given to man at once?

The only purpose of these pages is to present the practical side of Christianity so clearly and so forcibly that men will be compelled to acknowledge both the truth of the contention and the imperative demands of Christianity upon themselves. For this reason the formal phrases with which we usually speak of Heaven's supreme authority in spiritual things have been avoided. Experience has shown that men have hidden behind these dogmas and definitions and have utterly neglected plain demands upon their reason and upon the abilities which God has given them for just such uses as those which are now required of them. The Godward and spiritual side of the work of human redemption is abundantly presented in our pulpits and there is little danger that men will be allowed to forget it, as they have the more practical aspects of their religion.

The church can certainly trust God to do his full part in this work of world redemption if men will only do theirs. They do not need to hesitate a single moment for fear that God is not yet ready for them to move forward. And

soldiers upon the battle line do not need to be reminded of patriotism and allegiance to their cause. It is only stragglers who need lectures upon this point. Active Christian soldiers do not need to be told that both their inspiration and the victory must come from God. They have learned that lesson upon the field of action, and they have already forgotten the days when they tried to learn the lesson by rote in the prayer-meeting room. Let no one fear that an active church will forget to look to God on the eve of every battle, and to give him the glory when the victory is won. The church has yet to learn that not by might, nor by power, but by God's spirit, accepted into the hearts of men and made their inspiration to honest service, will the world be redeemed and won.

Have you received of the heavenly inspiration? If not, why do you wait? Is it because God has closed the fountains of inspiration and there is nothing to be done? Or is it because you have not yet become a willing disciple of the Savior of men?

Who Will Lead?

The soul that heareth the call of salvation may surely repeat it. The one who finds the way of duty opening up before him like a clear path, may surely walk in it. The one who can lead, may lead, if he has within himself the fire of action and the energy that comes of a determined purpose. One man gives the command to charge, but the command once given, there is nothing to prevent the veriest private soldier from being the first one upon the breastworks of the enemy.

And yet the ministry should be in the very forefront of this movement to redeem the blunders of the past and to turn over to those who come after us a church regenerated and a world redeemed. Their very office makes them the

leaders in spiritual things, and they cannot afford to let the earnest and sincere people of their communities take ground that is in advance of them, or lead in work which should not only have their approval but their enthusiastic support. If it is God's will that each and every community should be reclaimed for him, and every human creature should be reached with the gospel influence, then it is certainly their duty to give to the work their earnest co-operation and thoughtful direction.

Neither can they afford to become a drag upon the activities of their people. The church can never again be made into a lifeless, routine church, without disgrace. Human thought is too far advanced to permit this, even though Christian energy and enthusiasm is lacking. The Christian soldier must buckle on his armor and move forward, or incur the dishonor of being called a straggler. The Christian minister can never again satisfy the world with a gospel of barren words. There must be action and service because the times and human thought demand it; it is only a question as to what that service shall be and how directed. In this work the bravest and truest must lead, and the Christian minister should be both brave and true, and filled with the enthusiasm of the cause he represents.

Earnest Christian women may lead. They are a large majority in the church of Christ to-day, but being imbued with the Pauline spirit of subjection, they have tamely allowed the men to read their religion for them, and to them. And the result is a natural one. We have a man-made gospel of feeling or of form, one that can be preached from pulpits and made a source of profit, rather than a practical one of action which shall extend outside the church walls and convert the world. By all means let earnest Christian women lead in the new crusade, and the men, who thus far have made a mess of religion, be guided by the untrammelled instinct which Heaven has given to women,

rather than by the conceited wisdom which men try to discover for themselves. With the motto, "No soul unsought, no child not won," the Christian women of the land may be depended upon to show us the surest way to victory.

Young people and children may also lead. One of the most encouraging indications of the times is that of the devotion and enthusiasm of not only thousands, but millions, of young people who are taking hold of the destinies of the religious world with a firm and determined purpose. They have not yet found the nineteen lost young men, but they are seeking for them diligently and with fair prospects of ultimate success. The new crusade, if one is instituted, appealing as it will to the common sense and to the activities of young people, and especially young men, will help them in their quest. The new work of moral development along lines parallel with spiritual activity, will give them what they now lack, practical work for themselves, and a plea that will appeal to every heart and compel attention and consideration. The world belongs to the young people in reversionary right, and it is well that they should learn in the school of practical experience how to manage its destinies.

In this work the children should not be forgotten. They are the men and women of to-morrow and it is well that they, too, should learn by experience the significance of Christian service. And if we only knew it they are our best missionaries. They hold dominion in the hearts of many whom the church would gladly claim. By all means let us follow their guidance and thus find a way to the parents' hearts.

Let all lead as they may, and all follow as they should.

A Voice, but not the Voice of Man.

One man may voice the repressed thought of millions and when he does, it is not he who speaks, but mankind. One may sound the call to arms and a nation may respond, and yet it will not be the voice of one, but the voice of patriotic devotion of a nation that prefers death to dishonor. One man may be the instrument through which new truths are enunciated and new demands made upon the people of God, but the man is nothing. If what he speaks is truth and the demands that are made are right and just, it is not his voice that speaks, but the voice of God. Whenever the clarion notes of truth ring out, men disregard them at their peril, for God can use the weakest instrument to make known his will.

There is but one question to be asked and answered by those who read these words, and that does not concern the one who wrote them. Are they true? Has God's time really come for the redemption of the world? Have Christian men a duty to perform that they have long neglected? Is the voice of God calling to-day in millions of hearts for a clearer enunciation of truth and higher standards of duty and of service? If it is God's voice calling to mankind for the tithes of wealth, of service, of strict obedience, let no man think that he can escape it. Let no man think that he can hide from God or disdain the commands that are laid upon him in love, but with penalties of wrath for those who will not yield. Shall man defy God?

And yet why should men wish to defy him or refuse the commands that he has laid upon them? With a world to be redeemed why should not every heart respond with eagerness, and every duty be gladly done? The true soldier does not shirk or flinch when in the line of duty; why should not this great Christian army arouse itself from its lethargy and resolve with a divine enthusiasm, that the work

before it shall be done? Why should not the twentieth century dawn upon a land redeemed and ready to enter, with the prestige that comes from well-earned victories, upon the spiritual conquest of the whole world? With such a cause and such an inspiration what earnest-hearted man can refuse his help? Must the world be saved and we have no part or interest in the work?

Half Way Measures.

Reformation of the church by soft arguments and gentle suggestions of defects and shortcomings, evidently will not answer. A church that has slept and drowsed by turns for fifteen centuries cannot be aroused by gentle pushes and whispered reminders that the sun of righteousness is already high in the heavens and only needs to be let in upon a darkened world. It must be dragged from its flowery beds of self-delusion by arguments and appeals that carry conviction with them, and by criticisms that cleave the false from the true and leave men no recourse but to accept the truth and obey it. And as we stand shivering upon the icy floor of absolute truth, which has been made known to us, face to face with our duty and with not even the rug of dogmatism beneath us, there is but one question before a convicted church. Will it crawl back into its fleecy bed for another thousand years of fitful slumber and disgraceful inaction, vainly waiting for God to redeem it and the world about it, through miraculous agencies and by slow degrees? Will it dream of faith and mumble its prayers while it forgets its mission and the glorious victory that awaits its waking hours? Or will it stand before its God and the future as a brave man would, resolved that it will shake off the lethargy of indolence, and that by the grace of God and the power of human might, the world shall be redeemed and mankind taught the happiness and peace that come from a

full and complete submission to the revealed will of the Creator and Savior of the world?

Can a sleeping giant transform the world? Why will not men see that droning prayers and sermons that could be ground through a phonograph without detracting from their effect, are valueless when the times demand action and not professions? The call of God rings out as loudly now as it did nineteen centuries ago, commanding the church to preach an effectual gospel and to disciple all nations, teaching them to observe all things that Christ commanded, and not simply the chosen few that constitute modern Christianity. Why will the church be so blind and then complain that the world will not receive its garbled message?

We must prove to men that we have found the perfect and complete Christianity which Christ taught and which is to transform the world and our own lives as well. Our religion must be proven true before we can consistently ask our neighbor to accept it and become subject to it, and it cannot be proven true by our words alone. Do we really love our neighbors as ourselves? How then is it possible that our neighbors are so blind and unconscious to the fact?

I would that it could be made impossible by the common-sense religious sentiment of the age for any Christian to stand or kneel in the prayer-meeting room and ask for heavenly inspiration who has never felt the inspiration of his brother's need, or ask for his neighbor's salvation who has not already set in motion influences which may reach that neighbor's heart and save him. I would that it could be made forever impossible for any minister to stand in the pulpit and rehearse the platitudes of a gospel of words, who has not already aroused the Christian activities of his people and persuaded them to adopt common-sense methods for reaching men with the gospel influence and benefiting them, even if these measures do not result in their salvation from

sin. If the minister has no living message to offer; if he cannot arouse the energies of his people and make them Christians in fact as well as in name, let him stand speechless before his God until Heaven itself shall give him words that can reach human hearts and transform them for the work which Christ demands of us now, as he did when he was upon the earth.

I would that a religion of words and professions could be made forever impossible after the year 1896, and in this stricture I would include every non-Christian in the land. For a religion of professing nothing and yet claiming the right of criticizing those who in some small measure are attempting to serve God, if not their fellow men, may be as rank hypocrisy as any which the blundering, mistaken church members may exhibit. Let every man obey his God and serve the age that gave him birth, for each one has an equal duty and an equal interest in what concerns the welfare of all. Why should any man want to shirk his part in making this wonderful world which God has given us a glorious heritage for men?

The church must learn many new lessons, and among the rest let it be understood and acknowledged by everyone, ministers and laymen alike, that the minister's duty is not done when the salary he is paid has been earned. He has a duty to God that cannot be settled for with a board of church trustees. If the religion of Christ is too exacting, and the work of world redemption too hard for these, he must still declare the message of Heaven in all its completeness and all its severity, and when words fail he must find other means by which to reach human hearts. He alone of Christian disciples is under the imperious command to "go," not only to his flock, be it large or small, but to everyone within his parish world. The man who heareth may say "come," but the consecrated messenger of God cannot thus dodge his duty and neglect his mission. And if he

can be satisfied to carry a word gospel alone to those in need, and then charge God or the sinner with any defect in the message or deficiency in the result, he is not a true disciple of an exacting God. Neither has he caught the spirit of this age, which demands thoroughness and exactness, even in the manufacture of a pin, but has not yet learned to apply the principle to the work of reaching and saving a human soul or of redeeming the world. Shall a man rob and cheat God in the tale of his duty, who would disdain to be found one pin short in the measure of his business integrity.

Sons of God, or Kings of Self!

Is this too hard a doctrine for the Christian people of this enlightened age? Must the martyrs for Christ all come from the dark ages of the world's history, or from heathen lands, while we give up nothing for him, not even our own ease or comfort? Must our ministers preach to us a comforting gospel even to obtain a hearing? Shall we go on in the old ways simply because they are easy and familiar? Must the cause of humanity wait and linger until we come to it by slow degrees and according to the old conventional methods which entail no trouble or thought to anyone except to the minister and a few unselfish Sunday school teachers? While professing love for God must we care so little for our fellow men that an innocent child may become transformed into a demon before our very eyes and we never realize that, even as human beings, we have some interest and care in the child's destiny?

Why should not every man, woman, and child be asked and helped to attain to the very best destiny that is possible to him, and to improve every opportunity, both for his own moral growth and the advancement of the interests of mankind? Shall we "help one another to help all," or shall we remain devils incapable of human sympathy or of strict

obedience to God's commands, only waiting until God shall destroy us in his wrath and create a new race who will love and serve him? Having been made free and given the destiny of gods, must we remain brutes, forgetting every instinct of human sympathy and of honest love for God, and only insisting that we shall be allowed to go on in our selfish, heedless, forgetful way, hoping, of course, that God will save us in the end, but unwilling to help him save those who need salvation even more than we do ourselves?

Does God live, or must we prove by our inaction and indifference that he does not, that the Bible is an old woman's fable, and that trust and faith, and our blessed hope in a future life is a farce? Will men, when offered the sublime destiny of becoming sons of God, refuse it and make self their God, each one ruling in his little pigmy world of human greed and selfish lust?

Why will men never think, or, thinking, never act?

The Lord Omnipotent Reigneth!

Men cannot get away from the fact of God's existence. Every leaf and tiny insect, every throb of light and sound, and every thought and feeling in the human breast, give abundant proof of the power and wisdom of that greater Spirit whose habitation is the universe, and who rules these mystic forces of life and matter which we see and feel, but which in their subtler meaning are utterly beyond our comprehension. God is everywhere revealed. Not only do the Heavens declare his existence and the earth confirm the testimony, but these very intellects with which men are wont to scoff at things they cannot comprehend, are but a feeble type of the higher life from which all human life has come. We know there is a God not only because the imprint of his power and wisdom is stamped upon everything we see, or feel, or know, but because the perfect type

of the faculties we possess cannot be found in earth or in the starry heavens. As these are spiritual, and far above anything the world of matter can produce, we know that the source from which they came is far above ourselves, and is spiritual also.

Man, for all his pride and conceit, is but a mere atom of life upon the merest universe-speck of matter. He is infinitesimal, the universe is infinite. For him to intimate that he is the highest form of conscious life the universe contains and that all outside of himself, and above and beyond him, is senseless matter or blank despair, is the effrontery of ignorance. As well might the mollusk, inhabiting his painful of sand and water and thinking the universe contained therein, declare himself the highest possible form of life and think that the universe was made for him alone. The hand that can write of the deepest truths the human intellect can grasp, the tongue that can utter the sublimest thoughts the human intellect can suggest, and yet can declare that this thought and these faculties are the sum and substance of all possible knowledge or conscious life, are the hand and tongue of a vainglorious fool. These very faculties, marking as they do the infinite gap between mind and matter, should convince us that infinite possibilities still exist beyond these conditions of which we are cognizant, and that our earth-bound spiritual life is but a feeble hint of a spiritual existence infinitely far above it and beyond it. What should we, who know nothing of our nearest world neighbors even, know of the spiritual life of the myriads of hidden worlds we have not even seen, or of the great Spirit who inhabits the heart of the universe itself? Should infinitesimal worms seek to measure themselves with the infinite universe and declare that they are gods because they have found nothing to compare with themselves in their insignificant world? Because human eyes cannot see God must there be no God?

The man who can look into the starry night and, comparing himself with God's universe, can say that there is nothing above and beyond him, and no spirit life except in the human brain, is only another mollusk who would bound the universe by his own slimy trail and think the sun but a bon-fire built to warm his pigmy shell.

No God? Then there is no universe! Our very lives are but the delusions of the fevered breath of nothingness. Unless God lives, we do not, for we are but the type of infinitely higher things than any our little off-shoot world can show. Our eyes may pierce the heavens but they have only yet found one universe. The spiritual universe in which God lives and reigns, is still beyond their vision. What sublimer universes there may be besides this one and the one of matter, none can tell. Light is one line of communication between us and the very farthest sun. Shall we say there is no other? God gave us eyes that pierce the universe. Shall we say that no spirit-thrill can return to us from God's throne when our hearts are right with him?

Ah, little human mollusk, creeping about upon your pigmy ball of earth and water, boast not yourself that you have discovered everything and that there is no God!

Serve Ye the Lord!

It is only the apparent infidelity of Christian people that creates doubt and uncertainty in men's minds. If men know God and love him, they should serve him. If they believe in the future life and in Heaven and Hell, they should show by their earnest zeal in saving men for one and from the other, that these are not simply superstitious vagaries of the brain. If inspiration and power is given to those who ask for it in faith, why should Christian men stand as trembling apologists for the principles of their religion, and meekly ask men if they would not like to be saved? Do trembling, whispering advocates of Christianity prove a living Christ?

The apparent attitude of the church to-day in regard to the future life is that of a man who has well nigh decided that there is no God, and who is fearful that if he should zealously uphold Christianity and seek to advance it by aggressive means, that he might be overtaken by the discovery that it was all a mistake, and thus he would be put to open shame. If there is really infidelity in the church, and thousands of Christian ministers, as has been stated, do not know what to believe, the very best argument the church can offer to them and to the outside world is the prompt fulfilment of the Christian mission and the demonstration that Christianity is true in its promised effects, if in no other way. When the spirit of Christ reigns over the whole earth men will have tangible proof of the existence of God and of his Son, for they will be subject to his will and to his law. And we may be very sure that the revelation of God will at all times be commensurate with the world's need of knowing and recognizing him. He will never leave his true disciples in doubt upon this vital point.

The line of demarkation between faith and infidelity, between love for God and for his service and indifference to him, seems clear, but it is not always so clear upon which side of this line Christian people stand. For actions invariably speak louder than creeds. The church chooses its position upon this and upon every other moral question by the consensus of deeds, not words. By this test the church would appear to stand upon the side of infidelity, because it will not fulfil the mission entrusted to it and, thus far, has refused to redeem itself from the charge of gross neglect and of indifference, not only to God's commands, but to the moral needs of the world about it. Up to this time, perhaps, it may claim that to a certain extent it has been blindly at fault, because it has been surrounded by a dense atmosphere of tradition which not only blinded it to the truth and deadened its activities, but which seemed too heavy to pen-

etrate. But that excuse can no longer avail. The broadening thought of the present age will not allow to the church a hallowed sanctity in beliefs and customs which its own experience and a common sense interpretation of the Bible sufficiently disproves. Words and creeds will no longer suffice to uphold its position and excuse inaction. It must prove its religion true by deeds, not words, and reveal to men their Creator and God through the love which the Father has given to them, and which they are in duty bound to show to the unsaved world.

If men love God they will love their neighbors also. The new religion is nothing in the world but the old one from which love and service have too long been separated. The consecrations at God's altars when we professed to give up everything for Christ, must be made good. What we owe the Lord must be paid; and we certainly owe him the redemption of this American world within the next five years.

Is the demand for honest Christian service too hard for the Christian people of this age to accept? Must we forever mock God with a worship from which proven love and honest service has been left out? Must Christianity be judged by men's professions, and not by their deeds? Of what use to the world is a Christian church if it will not obey God and serve mankind?

Let Christian men obey and serve the Lord!

The New Crusade.

A crusade by the church or against it, seems inevitable. The holiest emotions of the human soul, the noblest impulses of the human heart, must not be prostituted to an aimless stirring of men's feelings and the rehearsing of empty praises of a God who demands strict obedience. If the work of the Christian church is already done; if the world is already redeemed and men are living in a perfect brother-

hood of sympathy and mutual helpfulness; if none are left outside the pale of a divine salvation and of a human brotherhood but those who can in no way be reached with any Christian influence, then let us sit down and listen to homilies upon religious topics and praise God because he has shown us how to bring this wonderful condition of things to pass. But if the work of the church is not done; if nineteen young men out of twenty are not saved and are not in sympathy with the church; if old men are left to curse God because of human neglect and human injustice; if the kingdom of peace and righteousness has not come even to the church of Christ; if an intense selfishness still rules the world and Satan is allowed to have his own way unchecked because it is such a troublesome matter to oppose him, then let the Christian minister or layman who counsels moderation and continued inaction, who declared in word or in creed that God, and not the church, is responsible for all these things and that the remedy is in prayer and in pulpit homilies, be counted an enemy of his race and not a friend. It is full time that the lines were sharply drawn that men may know who are their real friends, and who, professing friendship, really stand in the way of human advancement because they hold the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and will not unlock it to needy men.

Does this doctrine of the deep significance of the Christian's duty and the imperative demands of the Christian profession, bear hard upon any? The truth never oppresses those who are its friends and who gladly accept its teachings whenever and wherever they are made known. The false conceptions of truth in past ages has blinded many, and even now some may but dimly comprehend it. But the Word of God interpreted by human reason and the teachings of human experience, upholds the truth, and men can no longer escape it if they would. God is not at fault for the moral condition of the world at the present time, but

the church is. And now the redemption years or the judgment years for past error and past neglect, have come. If the church will not accept them and at once fulfil its duty to God and to the world, the judgment of Heaven for wilful wrong and neglect may yet fall upon it and no man can say that it will not be deserved. The age demands that those who claim to represent God upon the earth and to hold his message of a complete salvation for mankind, shall not keep that message hidden in their churches or wrapped so closely in creeds and dogmas and so hedged about with definitions, that even Christian people have not discovered that God-love and human sympathy is one and inseparable, and that this is Christianity.

The question before Christian people is simply this: Will the church enter at once and with determined energy upon an active fulfillment of its purposes and its avowed duty to mankind, bringing to men the blessings of a perfect moral, industrial, and spiritual condition in human affairs; or will it continue its present ineffectual methods of reaching men and influencing them, and its present insufficient religion, thereby winning the world's contempt rather than its admiration and respect? Will it live, and, living, redeem the world, or has it already entered into its dotage and is about to give away to positive moral forces which shall enlist every man's support and really accomplish the purposes for which they were instituted? Can the church any longer be depended upon as the divine instrument in human redemption, or must some other means be found for uplifting humanity and giving to men at once the glorious destiny that is in store for the world? Who shall carry the banners of God in the final victory of truth if Christian men still refuse to march forward?

The question whether or not the banners of truth and righteousness shall be carried forward to speedy victory, is one for every individual Christian to decide for himself and

for the organization to which he belongs, and the sad thought is that it may be answered honestly and loyally, or it may be pushed aside as it has been in every year and century of the past. In any human warfare there would be no doubt. With the cry of "Forward!" an eager host would rush forward to victory or to brave defeat. But what can be expected of the Christian church? The impotency of words was never felt before as it is felt now by the one who writes these lines. Some may heed and be spurred into a fitful activity, but if we can judge the future by the past, the great majority will exhibit but little interest in this, the greatest of all important matters. Closing their hearts and consciences to the truth as they may be led to see it, they will go on in the old ways, leaving to God and to the angels the plain duties which have been put into their hands, and really indifferent as to whether men are saved or damned. Ministers will still preach a comfortable religion which calls for no service and no self-denial, and indolent Christian men will still believe in it. Out of twenty young men nineteen will perhaps justly turn their backs upon the church because the church has nothing whatever for them to do, and because there is neither enthusiasm or satisfaction in working, or in loafing, in behalf of a dead cause. And possibly the world will still remain lost until God either destroys it in his wrath or raises up a new church to redeem it.

Will all these things be true of the Christian church in 1897, or can the hearts of Christians be stirred to enthusiasm and the world redeemed from sin? Does God or Satan really rule the world? If Satan, are we his disciples?

The Final Contention.

It is held to be self-evident:

That it is the fault of the Christian church and not of God that the world is not saved.

That words and professions, alone, and even zealous worship, while they may form a religion, do not constitute Christianity.

That the religion of humanity cannot be divorced from Christianity and leave it complete, or of any particular value to the world. The same command that tells us to love God with heart, soul, and strength, commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we ignore the claims of humanity in our religion, we can have no claim upon the love of God.

That the modern conception of Christianity is not the true one; that it is not the primitive Christianity which Christ and his apostles taught and so fully exemplified by their energy and persistence and in their tragic deaths.

That being a negative Christianity of feeling, rather than a positive one of action, it is not fitted for the active, aggressive life of the present age of the world. An inactive, negative Christianity never has, and never can, redeem the world. There is neither inspiration nor self-evident value in it.

That human experience proves that the miraculous conception of God's dealings with men and with human problems is not the correct one; that we are not puppets moved about by divine intelligence and energy, but independent instruments through whom God's purposes in the world are to be accomplished; that being intelligent instruments and not automata, and having been given a definite part in the work of human redemption, God will not trench upon the province of our action or become our bidden servant for the performance of duties we are too indolent to accomplish for ourselves; that prayer and an indolent faith can never be made the substitute for honest work and earnest thought in the problems of world redemption.

Since Christianity is an active force and cannot be made into a negative grace, the church is not fulfilling its mission

to the world by preaching a religion of aspiration and fruitless emotion; that nothing but sharp, decisive, aggressive action, adapting means to ends and keeping the end persistently in view, can redeem the church from the charge of imbecility and of criminal indifference to the real needs of humanity, or save the world. While Christians preach and pray and flatter themselves over their optimistic percentages of increase, a large majority of mankind, even in our own land, is being lost.

Since Christianity is the only direct and avowed moral agency in the world, the demands of the times call for a radical change in church methods and systems and an actual accomplishment of the objects which have been left to it as being within its peculiar province; that the church, in leaving the accomplishment of these objects to haphazard influences and to a dim and indefinite future when all men shall become voluntarily subject to its emotional and insufficient religion, is recreant to its duty to God, to the nation, and to mankind, and is morally responsible for the soul-death of those who are lost through its neglect. It might have saved them, but it would not.

That the times demand decisive measures and a religion that can really transform the moral world and save our children from the temptations that now assail them upon every hand, and that the church has no right to present to the world as the true religion the emasculated Christianity which is now preached in its churches and illustrated in the moral inactivity of its disciples. If it will not accomplish the purposes for which it was organized, it should step aside and allow these purposes to be accomplished through other means.

That with a real Christianity, one that appeals to the common sense of the people and enlists their sympathy with the objects actually being accomplished by it, the moral and social redemption of our communities is a simple matter

and it can virtually be accomplished in much less time than that of the few remaining years of the present century.

That the time has come for a sharp advance in the standards of Christian efficiency and duty, for a strict fulfillment of the vows and consecrations made at God's altars, and for the immediate transformation of our modern Christianity from a spiritual grace into a positive, world-regenerating force.

That the time has come for the organization of our entire communities upon the Christian basis of mutual helpfulness and an avowed allegiance to God, and it has certainly come when every child should be claimed and firmly held for the best possible human destiny, and for its eternal welfare and the welfare of the world.

That the time has also come for the gradual obliteration of all denominational lines and a common agreement upon essential points of doctrine and of practice, and for concerted action in support of Christian principle and in the speedy conquest of the world in the name of Christ and of humanity.

That sharp and clear as it is in the Word of God and as it ever has been since the Bible was given to men, is the distinction between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, between glad allegiance to God and an entire indifference to his commands, between service and self-denial in the cause of humanity and a thoughtless disregard of the command to love our neighbors as ourselves, between true Christianity and a negative and misleading religion that is but a parody upon it; and that that distinctive line is being drawn in America to-day far more closely than it was ever drawn before, and that it will be drawn still more closely in the future. Upon one side of this line is progress and the spiritual conquest of the world, upon the other is stagnation and an abject yielding to continuous defeat. And it is for every individual and for every Christian organization to

decide upon which side of this line they stand. If upon the wrong side, they are not disciples of Christ. If upon the right side they must prove it, not by professions, but by an immediate enlistment in the active service of Christ and by winning the world for him. That action, and only action, is the test of Christianity.

A BLADE O' GRASS.

A Blade o' Grass.

A FLASH-LIGHT PICTURE FROM A HUMAN LIFE.

Is man the cousin of the brutes? Or has he a destiny higher than that of the whelp that dogs her master's footsteps and knows no law but his? When man and brute are dead, do they fill one common grave?

Did God actually breathe into our human bodies the breath of a divine life and thus make us heirs of Heaven and co-existent with himself, or are we still brutes with no destiny but to rot and no hope but to be forgotten?

Being only brutes, shall we yet live like men, or being men, shall we choose instead the destiny of brutes, denying our God and casting our defiance in our Maker's face, and using the very freedom he has given us to defeat his plans and purposes for our own higher destiny and the perfect consummation of his world designs? Like the brutes, shall we at last lie down in graves that cannot bury the decay of the soul, however well they may hide the stench from decaying human carcasses?

God lives or the earth itself is a huge farce. A universe may possibly create itself and find the balancing forces of gravity and motion, but only God can create and fashion a human soul. If the soul of man has no destiny beyond the grave all nature has come to an absurdity. The highest and most perfect creation of the known universe is a brute who fulfills no destiny but to rot and to fertilize the earth

upon which he exists. When the earth also dies, as the earth must, the farce will be ended and all will have come to naught. Life, love, aspiration, hope, the noblest attributes of the mind and the holiest emotions of the soul, mean nothing, for they are the product of nothing and become nothing in the end. And twenty billion worlds with their big and little brutes inhabiting them, are also naught. For each is but a cypher, working out a short-lived, aimless destiny, and sinking into nothingness again, unknown, unread, and unremembered. Matter is eternal, but soul and spirit die with each death-bed sigh. Matter is infinite, but thought and feeling, love divine and holy emotion, is but the vapor of nothingness, arising and falling again like summer showers.

Can the mind of man conceive of so great an absurdity? Has the earth brought forth so perfect a flower as man only that he may become nothing again? Has the death-freed soul no destiny but complete extinction? Must all other life live again in other and higher life, but the very highest of all become a barren mockery and lead only to blank despair? Is the universe only a jumble of similar absurdities, each as senseless and as aimless as our own? Or is there a God over all who fashions and directs these infinite possibilities in order that they may work out a grander conception, a more perfect consummation, than the mind of man can grasp in the most daring flights of the imagination.

Although men may continue to say that there is no God, although there may be no adequate reason for the existence of the universe, or of one human soul, although men themselves may be but pigmy puppets which a self-created nature has placed upon the stage for her own short-lived amusement, yet there are implanted in many a human breast attributes which link us with the noblest conception of deity which ever found a place in human thought or record.

The breath of the Infinite dwells within us, deny it as we may. If we are really brutes with a brute's destiny, the divine instincts within us should teach us that we should yet live like men. If we are but happy freaks of nature, at least let us not live like the other brutes who eat, and and die, and rot. Let us follow out the divine impulses within us and leave a nobler impulse upon the world than we received from it, and not shame our God-like spirits with beast-like passions and empty lives.

Does God really live? The fool has answered, no. But the wise man beholds God in every pulse-throb of nature, and in every human emotion, and gladly taking him into his heart of hearts, makes him King of all. As man lives so God lives, for man is but the breath of the Infinite, dwelling in houses of human clay, but showing in every thought and aspiration the infinitude of the universe of spirit life. The heart and soul of the universe is God, and Him we worship.

Upon the shores of Lake Erie there is a summer encampment resort where thousands annually congregate to learn more of nature and of nature's God. A stretch of woodland formerly came down to where the land breaks off into the lake with many a bowlder and ragged rock to mark the eternal battle-line between the sea and the land. This woodland, with the exception of a bit of park upon the shore, has been transformed into a pretty rural city with its big amphitheater in the center, an ambitious hotel upon the shore, and some hundreds of summer cottages closely clustered together about its great summer audience room. The very existence of this summer city proves that the people of the nineteenth century after Christ, still retain some of the nomadic instincts of the people of the nineteenth century before his coming.

The time of our brief visit is that bewitching hour between the heat and glare of a July day and the darkness

and stillness of night, when nature appears at her loveliest and seems to be inviting man to share her quiet repose. The air, from being stifling and hot from a persistent land breeze, had become cool and balmy as the wind veered about and commenced bringing in upon the shore the moisture-laden atmosphere of the lake.

A crowd of people, gathered largely from the larger lake cities and the near-by towns, were walking up and down the shore of the lake or loitering about in the park. They were enjoying to the utmost the cooling lake breeze, and seemed, like nature, to be under some mystic spell. Here and there children were rushing about, as children will until sleep lays forcible hands upon them, but the others seemed to be in rhythmic sympathy with the swelling waves that broke at regular intervals upon the rocky beach, and with the murmuring wind.

Among those moving so idly about were two men who were apparently renewing the friendship of an earlier day and were discussing some subject upon which they were not agreed. As is often the case in friendships formed in earlier life, one of the men seemed to be positive and aggressive in character, a natural leader among men, while the other was quieter in disposition, although, perhaps, no less strong in his convictions. Approaching a bench upon one end of which a keen eyed, dark complexioned young man sat, the leader of the two men sat down, leaving room at the other end of the bench for his companion.

"Oh, well, it will be all right when we get up to Glory, Joel," he said. "We wont need to argue over matters of theology then."

"Yes, indeed!" his friend exclaimed. "It will be all right up yonder, Ame."

But Amos Kerr, the first speaker, apparently thought that he had admitted too much or had spoken too fervently. "After all," he continued, "how do we know that there is

any such place as Heaven? There is no real proof of its existence. One man can see into the future just as far as another, and as far as we can see, death ends all. No one we are acquainted with ever comes back to tell us about any such place. The dead never speak."

"You forget that Christ arose from the dead," said Joel.

"No, I don't. But suppose I am skeptical upon that point as well as upon the rest?" Kerr answered. "What real proof have we of his resurrection, outside of the three or four witnesses who have written an account of it?"

"What better proof have we of any fact in history? It seems to me that the testimony of three or four honest witnesses ought to be sufficient. It is only necessary to prove them honest, and in this case their acts and words do that for us."

"Yes, but suppose that these few men were deceived, or deceived themselves? Or even suppose that they honestly entered into a plot to deceive the world for the world's good? The Jesuits claim that the end justifies the means, you know."

"But you must remember that the resurrection of Christ was an acknowledged fact, not only to the disciples, but to the whole early church. The whole fabric of Christianity is based upon it as its central truth. I do not believe that the whole band of the early disciples were insincere men, or if they were, that the whole civilized world could be transformed and civilized by such a lie as that would have been. And I do not believe that millions of Christians, to-day, are deceived when they say that they have within themselves the evidence that Christianity is true."

But Kerr's thoughts had run onto another point of his creed of unfaith, entirely ignoring his friend's argument. "I cannot believe in your idea of a personal God, either," he said. "It seems to me that a God who would punish a man eternally for committing a sin in this life, which is

as a wink of an eye compared with eternity, would be an inhuman God and one unworthy of worship. You sing:

'When I've been there ten thousand years.
Bright, shining as the sun,
I've no less days to sing God's praise,
Than when I first begun.'

And all this time, and for all the eternity that follows after, according to your theology, God is punishing a poor sinner for the mistakes he has made in this moment of time we live upon the earth. An immortal punishment for a mortal sin! I confess I cannot understand it in the least."

"You do not need to understand it, do you?" his friend asked, rather weakly. It was a point he was not very clear about in his own mind.

There was a nervous movement at the end of the bench where the young man sat, evidently an eager listener to the conversation, but Kerr did not appear to notice it. "Yes, I do," he said. "I am an intelligent being and have a mind that was given me to use in all such cases. When these questions come up I want to understand them thoroughly before giving assent to the principles involved in them. All punishment worthy of the name is reformatory. Anything more than this is simply revenge. When a man reaches the point where he is willing to repent and reform, he ought to be allowed another chance."

"How do you know that he will ever reach that point if he does not reach it in this life?" Joel asked. "There is no limit upon the time for real repentance as long as this life lasts." He was making as brave a defense as he could upon the spur of the moment, but he was evidently not quick witted enough for a clever disputant, and Kerr was getting beyond his depth. He had probably never listened to these skeptical arguments before, and he had no arguments clearly defined in his own mind with which to meet them.

"In that case it will be his own lookout, I suppose," Kerr answered. "He takes his chances. But you take it upon yourself to tell him that if he does not repent in this little moment of time he is upon the earth, it will be eternally too late. After that the devil may have him and roast him upon his gridiron forever." Kerr smiled grimly at his own exaggerated way of stating the case, and seemed quite willing to dwell upon the thought.

Meanwhile the stranger at the end of the bench got up and walked away a few steps, as if undecided what to do, and then returned and sat down again. If Kerr noticed him at all it was with the satisfaction of one who gladly welcomes a larger audience when he thinks that he is getting the advantage in an argument. "An eternity of torture for an insignificant sin!" he continued. "How can you worship such a God as that?"

"No conscious sin against God is insignificant," said Joel.

"Yes, it is!" exclaimed Kerr. "Without thinking of the consequences I do something that is not quite right. And we all do that. The best man that lives is not perfect. My sin may not harm any one but myself. But for that sin I am condemned to suffer for endless ages! You may believe in such a God, but I cannot. I must believe that if any one is saved, the whole human family will be. I am not so much worse than you that I must be damned through all eternity, while you sing psalms forever. You know that I am not quite so bad a rascal as that, Joe."

"I know that you are a first rate good fellow, Ame, and the best friend that I ever had; but there is one great difference between us. Even if I do not understand everything about the future life, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and ask God for mercy, while you do not. I am afraid, Ame, that you read too much of Ingersol and too little of the Bible. It doesn't pay to try to climb up into Heaven some

other way than the Bible way, even if one can boast of being as good, in a certain sense, as one's neighbors."

"And think of another thing!" Kerr exclaimed, catching at a new thought from the association of the word. He was evidently more anxious to air his own arguments than to listen to those of his friend. "Just think what Heaven will be. Full of little babies and imbeciles, for you believe that all these will be saved, while Hell will contain such men as Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Ingersol, and some of the brightest intellects that were ever known—

"And August Spies, Herr Most, and 'Blinkey' Morgan," suggested a voice at his elbow, "to say nothing of ten thousand million or so of vagabonds, criminals and villains, of foul women and still fouler men. We know that these will be condemned. How do you like this part of the company, you—thief?"

An angry flush came into Kerr's face at this last word of his strange interlocutor, but the open smile with which the charge was accompanied quite disarmed him. "Isn't that a pretty strong word?" he asked, answering the smile rather than the words of the stranger.

"No; it is not half strong enough," was the half joking reply. "I was tempted to put two or three vigorous adjectives before it. I have been listening to you pretty much against my will until I am rather wrathful. You have not stolen anyone's pocketbook; you might have got some good out of that. But it seems that you have been trying to steal the faith of your best friend, something that would have done you no good if you had succeeded—mind, I do not say that you could succeed—but would have cost him his hope of salvation and an eternity of happiness. I have caught you in the very act, so you will be compelled to plead guilty." The last words were spoken with a low, mellow laugh that quite took away the sting of the words themselves.

"Suppose I do," Kerr answered in the same spirit. He saw that it would only place him at a disadvantage to show resentment. "Don't you see how that illustrates my argument? I am responsible for that sin, and my friend Ford, here, is the innocent victim of it. But because I have stolen his faith he will have to suffer through all eternity. Is it a just God who punishes him for my sin?"

"God never punished any one save Christ, only, for another's sin!" the stranger answered earnestly. "Your friend has no business to allow you to rob him of his faith. That would be his part of the sin and for that he would be punished, if we can call rejection, when one has the opportunity to win an immortal prize and refuses it, by the name of punishment. But it seems to me that the man himself is the one who does the punishing. Can you escape that conclusion? He has the choice and chooses the fate that pleases him best. And we must remember that every one has the faculty of judging and must be held responsible for his own faith and his own obedience. The foulest son of a wicked father has a clear sense of right and wrong, and the power to choose the right if he only will. If he will not, he has no right to expect anything but the consequences of his sin, and if these are eternal it is so much the worse for him."

"I don't know about that," Kerr said. "Man is the product of his environment, and is not wholly responsible for his character. He may have the power to break away from surrounding circumstances as a last resort, but very few are able to muster up the will power necessary to accomplish it. You cannot blame the crooked tree for not becoming straight."

"You are wrong there," exclaimed the stranger. "No one but a basswood man or a man of putty is the product of his environment; never a man of energy and common sense. Are you obliged to walk forever in the straight jacket that your parents or your wicked companions have placed upon you? Because you have been taught or allowed to do a

certain thing, must you keep on doing it indefinitely? The man who is pushed and pulled about until he has no individuality of his own, is only fit for an imbecile asylum. He is the product of his own folly and putty-like indolence. The true man rises above his circumstances, and makes his own environment. It is easy to see that you cannot plead imbecility in this matter. You are a rebel without excuse. You have robbed God, even if you have not succeeded in robbing your friend."

"A rebel?" asked Kerr, flushing again. The tables had been turned upon him with a vengeance. The impetuosity of the stranger's words left him no opportunity to formulate arguments against them. He could only take refuge behind such minor objections as occurred to him.

"Yes; did you not just now boast that you were not a rascal? For the sake of the argument let me show you how great a rascal you are in God's sight. You know that you sat down here and compelled me to listen to your arguments against my will, or hunt another seat. You have no right to complain at being repaid with interest." The stranger's musical laugh rang out pleasantly again. "What would you be if you held the same relation toward your government that you do toward your God? That little button upon your coat shows that you ought to be able to appreciate that argument. You know that you would be a rebel. How much more of a rebel must you be when you reject and disdain the commands of your Creator, of your Heavenly Father? Can a man defy God and yet not be guilty of sin?"

"Suppose you prove that I have a Heavenly Father. I do not say that I have not. But it is for you to prove the fact before you condemn me for being a thief, a rebel, and I don't know how many other things." Kerr laughed confidently, for he believed that this would bring the argument to a point where he would be able to hold his own, if not to demolish his opponent.

The young man arose from his seat and stepping across the walk, plucked a single blade of grass. Returning, he stood up in front of the bench where he had been sitting, and, resting one foot upon it, held up the blade of grass in his hand. "There is your proof," he said, simply.

"How so?" asked Kerr, rather taken back at the novelty of the argument.

"That is your Heavenly Father's signature, which no one can even duplicate, the sign manual of his creative power. Men did not make this, did they?"

"No one claims that men had anything to do with creation."

"Could you, or any other human being, with this pattern before you, make a blade of grass like this?"

"No; certainly not."

"But you are a representative of the very highest intelligence that ever existed upon the earth. Geology proves this. If this intelligence, with all the resources that modern science and invention places at our command, cannot create a blade of grass, or even reduplicate it, what power did create it?"

"Nature."

"Have you ever considered what you mean by the word, nature, when you use it so glibly? There is nature in her primitive form, out yonder. Rocks, air, and water. That is all that existed before God created the grass of the field and animal life. If nature, and not God, created the grass, she ought to be able to reduplicate her work. Suppose you ask the rocks, air, and water yonder, to make you a blade of grass?"

Kerr's friend laughed outright at the suggestion. Kerr, himself, would have answered but he recognized the comparative weakness of any answer he could make, and was silent.

"And when they have made a blade of grass, let them make a man!" the stranger continued. "Don't you see that

it is ridiculous, and that you cannot get away from God by trying to put nature into his place. I know what you would answer. That these processes have been going on for millions of years and that in some way or other, how you can scarcely conjecture, but through some conditions of heat and moisture that do not prevail now, the first blade of grass bearing fruit in itself and the first animal life were created. After that the rest seems easy. Any Yankee can make a clock, taking another clock as a pattern, of course. But did any Yankee ever make a clock that would run of itself a dozen years or more, and then make another clock like itself in order to keep up the succession? Given a clock like this we might possibly figure out a self-reproducing steam engine out of it, but there would still be the Yankee behind it all. But you say that man has no designer but blind chance, and no creator but the assistant forces of nature. The instincts and the attributes of a God in the product, but no God in the creation! A very god within his earth-bound limits, but not allowed to be a type of a higher being of which we can know nothing through our material senses. Is it not an absurdity? Can you recognize the sublime fact of the existence of man in all his glorious attributes, and yet positively deny the existence of God, at once the perfect consummation and source of all these attributes?"

"But Darwin shows how the processes of an orderly development may be made to account for all these results," Kerr persisted. "You cannot ignore the teachings of science in regard to the wonderful development which has taken place in plant life and in animal organism."

"Certainly not, nor do I care to ignore it," the stranger answered. "I simply say that it comes very far short of accounting for the origin of either material or spiritual things. Darwin admits the fact of what he calls a missing link or two, but it is in reality the greater portion of the

chain itself. He shows growth and development, and no one disputes that, but he does not explain creation, or explain how the elements of nature obtained their marvelous properties which, in fact, constitute the very highest proof of God's existence. Only revelation tells us that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and gave to the elements the properties they possess. Only the Word of God tells us that when the physical man was perfected, God himself breathed into his nostrils the breath of a divine life and man became, in the image of his Maker, an ever living soul. There is a soul in man. You cannot deny this even in a physical sense. There is also a soul in matter since the compass turns to the pole wherever it may be, and man can stretch his copper wire about the world and command it to speak to those who dwell beneath our feet. Think you that there is not also a soul in the universe, and that this sentient, living, creative power is not God himself? Is man or matter greater than the universe since these possess a soul and the universe does not? My friend, evolution and the reign of law will not help you in your argument. They do not go far enough. Back of evolution and back of law there must be the Creator and the Law-giver. And, knowing the infinite gap between himself and matter, and yet realizing the real limitations of his powers, man is the last one in the universe to deny the existence and power of his Creator, God."

"But even admitting all you claim, it does not fully prove that there is a God," Kerr declared. "There is still room for a reasonable doubt as to the fact of his existence."

"It proves it as far as we need to go," the stranger said. "I set up the Bible and a blade of grass and rest my case. These are certainly proof sufficient to demand our obedience to the creative and ruling sovereignty that they reveal to us, and to the spirit of truth and reason that is revealed in every line of the Word of God, and in every demand that

it makes upon us. There is but one alternative open to those who deny this testimony and these demands. It is to overthrow it by conclusive rebuttal evidence. Can you do that?"

"Of course no one can prove that the Bible is not true in its essential particulars, and that there is no God. I can readily admit that."

"It seems to me then that you will be compelled to obey." The stranger's laugh rang out pleasantly once more. "The proof may not satisfy you, but such as it is, it is all on our side. You cannot disprove a well supported affirmation by a bare negation. With ten thousand mysteries in the world that you cannot possibly explain, you cannot claim that it is proven that there is no God simply because you have not seen him."

"But your idea of God, or the Bible idea, if you choose to call it so, is an unreasonable one to me. How can I obey a God whom my reason tells me is unjust or inhuman?"

"Is God unjust or inhuman to those who obey him fully?" the stranger asked, warmly.

"Perhaps not. But we are all his creatures. He is responsible for our being. Why should he condemn us because we are weak or foolish?"

"Because he has made us capable of the highest wisdom and the greatest strength!" the man answered earnestly. "He has made us but little lower than the angels in mental and spiritual capacity, and we—we sometimes sink lower than the brutes! Is there no reason for condemnation in that? The animals are his creatures, but that gives them no claim upon Heaven. How much less is a human being entitled to it who, being god-like in his attributes, makes himself a brute, and a disobedient one at that? If we are God's creatures we are under his law, and if that law is inexorable, as all good laws are, there is nothing for us but to submit. Do men wilfully break human laws and then plead the baby act to escape punishment? God is a God of

justice only to those who refuse to obey! To all others he is the all-merciful, all-loving Father. If a man is a rebel he has no right to prate about mercy. If he is an obedient son he has no reason to be troubled about justice. Your only trouble seems to be that you want the mercy without the submission. Is that reasonable? Is it honest? Is the father unjust or inhuman who demands prompt obedience from his child? Applied to human conditions your theory of an indefinitely postponed submission and a final salvation would overturn all right government and make every child an incipient devil, as too many of them now are. You can surely see enough of the results of that policy all around you. What right have you to expect that it would work better under eternal conditions that you know nothing about? Why should you want a weak, grandmotherly policy adopted for the especial benefit of the spoiled children? Does such a policy make men strong and self-reliant, or does it make them the weakest and most despicable of men? When you appeal to reason, my brother, you should be sure of your premises. If you appeal to reason you must be a just judge, and not simply make your reason an excuse for disobedience."

The stranger's words came hurriedly, as though many thoughts at once were waiting for utterance. It was evident enough that he was upon familiar ground. His earnest manner, too, was an indication that he had wrought out this knowledge by dearly bought experience.

"But the people who do not accept Christianity are not all incipient devils, or full grown ones," Kerr said. "Many of them are as kind hearted and as honest as Christian people. What are you going to do with these in the future world? How can you reconcile their punishment in the next life with your idea of an all-merciful Father?"

"Suppose we clear up our understanding of that word, punishment," the stranger said. "I am not sure that any of

us are clear upon its meaning, or that we understand the Bible signification of the word. I do not think it means punishment in the sense of retaliation, and no thinking man can claim that. It is contrary to the whole spirit of the Bible. But the Bible does seem to teach eternal rejection for wilful sin that is not repented of. Is there anything wrong or unjust in that? Can there be any greater sin than rebellion against God? Why should any one think that a tender heart could atone for that! Mind, I am not limiting God's mercy. I do not know what he will do with honest doubters in the judgment day. But if the people you refer to refuse to submit to the simple test which God places before them, why should they receive greater consideration than those who have far greater excuse? Remember, no one has a claim upon Heaven. It is a free gift to those who come to God in the way he has pointed out. The test of manhood is not a tender heart. It is willing obedience to all rightful authority. Else it were useless that God breathed into our nostrils the breath of a divine life and made us his sons. Man was probably a good enough animal before that, and the animals have tender hearts as well as we. If the divinely endowed man will not obey the one who has thus honored him, what can God do but reject him? Is he still under obligations to whip him into Heaven by a course of reformatory punishment?"

"He might give him another chance," said Kerr.

"How can he give him another chance without a return to the same conditions, and if he were under these, of what benefit would his chance be to him? He has twice ten thousand chances already. His conscience is a daily evangelist to him, and every day is a fresh opportunity to redeem the past and to serve God in the future. Do you realize that this life is something unique in its relations to the future life? It is the birthplace and training time of the soul! It is the only possible testing time for men. Suppose,

for the sake of the argument, that man should be given a taste of future punishment as you call it, and then be sent back to live his life over again. What effect would it have upon him except to substitute an utterly selfish motive for those of love and duty which now actuate the true Christian? Do you think that God wants men in Heaven after they have been whipped out of Hell? My friend, you do not use your intellect half enough. Reason tells you that this life ends forever your trial and determines whether you go into the next life an obedient child of God, or a rebel against his authority."

"You still fail to reveal an all-merciful God," Kerr persisted. "Your God is a God of exact justice to the great majority of his creatures. I cannot believe in a God who permits two-thirds or more of his human creatures to perish because they are weak or foolish."

"Have you ever considered that weakness or folly may be the greatest of sins when we have clearly the power to overcome them? Did you ever hear of an all-merciful judge who pardoned every culprit who came before him on account of their weakness or folly? What logic is there for a mercy that is always on tap for any rascal who feels the pricking of the law. Has not God provided an easy and a sufficient way for the salvation of everyone? Surely he could not make the test easier than it is. It is not God that is at fault, my friend, but stubborn and rebellious man. He will not be saved because he prefers his own way to God's way. You are like the rest of the modern idolaters. They will not accept the God that both nature and the Bible reveal to them, but persist in manufacturing one out of 'reason,' one who will allow them to go on in their own wilful way to the very end, and yet save them by some hocus-pocus process in another world. The creed-makers are hardly done with the Bible before the God-makers commence with it. And I am afraid that I shall have to class you among them. It is

the last of the indictments I shall bring against you." Once more the musical laugh broke the harshness of the spoken words. "They want to make a new God and a new Christ according to some improved notion of their own; and you will always notice that they either make a namby-pamby being who cannot reject sinners because he is so merciful, or one who is so far away that he has no concern with sin whatever. The indifference toward God and to his commands is to remain in either instance. They even banish Hell, for that implies punishment for the disobedient. But the new God is, after all, only a deification of the idea of self. The very foundation of their creed seems to be that the human will is omnipotent. Man should not be asked to yield allegiance, even to his Maker. The real God, the one who created the universe, is either dead or sleeping. He no longer has the power of revealing himself to men. Miracles are impossible. The Bible is a book of fables. The Savior of mankind is only the historical outline of a very superior human being. And having demolished, as they think, the only evidence of Heaven, they proceed to create a new one to their notion, and propose to save men by allowing them to do as they please! Great is the man-made religion! Great is the Diana of modern reason!"

The stranger paused, but Kerr did not answer immediately. From the eager disputant, he had become the willing listener. He took no offense at the speaker's home thrusts, for he more than half acknowledged their truth. "If we were only sure!" he said at length.

"Sure of what?" the stranger asked. "Sure that there is a Hell so that we might repent and thus escape it? You do not mean that, I know, my brother?"

"No, but sure of everything; sure that there is a God; sure of the truth of the Bible."

"Of what real benefit would certainty be to us? Do you not see that it would destroy the fundamental idea of our

religion, faith in a God that we cannot see with our natural eyes? If a man were sure of the existence of God and of his power to punish or to reject for sin, the great element in our repentance would be fear. But even then he would probably be as foolish and as stubborn as ever. You and I know that if the legend, 'Love God and serve him!' were written in letters of light across the sky it would be an old story in six months' time, and some scientist would probably be trying to explain it away upon natural principles. Is the legend less forcible because it is spelled in innumerable stars, and not in words? God has revealed enough of his power, and of his love and tender mercy to merit our love and allegiance in return. If we will not give him these it is not our reason that is at fault, but our stubborn wills. Why cannot you see, my brother, that God knows best, and that everything is just right as it is, except man's attitude toward his Maker? That you and I with our little insignificant brains and our shortsighted eyes, cannot make a better God than Jehovah, or a better plan of salvation than the one he has offered to us? The grand idea of making a race of beings in whom perfect love and perfect freedom should go hand in hand, is one that is well worthy of the great God who inhabits the heavens and who created the universe. It is not a failure although it may seem so to our puny eyes, and we ourselves are the obstacles to its complete success. God could have made religious machines far more easily than he could have made the perfect manhood with which man was first endowed. If we use the very freedom he has given us to rebel against him, it does not alter the beauty of the conception or the grandeur of the plan. What are you and I that we should find fault with God's work?"

A little knot of people, attracted by the man's eloquence, had gathered about them. It was already dusk, and the last bell for the evening service had already rung. Some upon the outskirts of the crowd were asking: 'Is that Sam Jones?'

The fact that he was attracting unwelcome attention cut short the stranger's words. Hastily introducing himself to the two men and learning their names in return, he departed into the darkness and the crowd melted away.

"I thought that he must be a minister," Joel Ford said to his companion. "I am glad that we happened to sit down here, for he answered you a thousand times better than I could. I never heard one who seemed to have everything so clear in his own mind. He must have gone through the whole thing himself."

"He is a regular Methodist fire-eater!" Kerr answered, laughing. "I could no more keep up with him than I could keep up with a steam engine. But he has given me something to think about. I am not sure but that he is right, after all."

"Of course he is right!" said Ford. "You will see that it is the truth yet. We need the help of such men as you in the church, Ame. You do not know how much you might help the work along if you would turn in and help us, instead of keeping men away from us by your doubting opinions. Shall we go and hear Sam Jones? He must be speaking by this time."

"No, I thank you. One such sermon a day is all that I can digest. Your Sam pitched into me last night, and now this man has used me up worse than ever. Sam only called me a rascal, but this man calls me a thief, a rebel, an idolatrer, and I don't know what else besides. And the worst of it is that he seems to make out a pretty strong case against me. I wonder if my wife suspected what a box she was getting me into when she brought me down here? I half believe she did, the artful madam! No, Joe, you go and hear Sam Jones. I will stay here and think it out!"

Meanwhile one in the little crowd that had gathered about the disputants and who had seemed greatly interested in the

argument, watched the departing stranger in a way that revealed something more than a mere passing interest. It was as if she had recognized a long lost friend and yet lacked the power to reach out and restrain him, or to make herself known. With another lady who was her companion, she had passed and repassed the little group two or three times until the gathering crowd had given them an excuse to linger. Her eyes had lighted up with something more than admiration as the stranger's eager utterances had revealed something of his strength of mind and of character. When he stopped speaking she drew a little farther back into the shadow so as not to attract his attention if he should chance to turn toward them. When the crowd melted away the two ladies resumed their apparently aimless walk.

"Wasn't he eloquent!" exclaimed the lady's friend. "Who is he, I wonder? There are so very few, even among ministers, who are really in earnest, and who act as if they believed anything!"

"His name is Hunter," was the lady's quiet response. But there was something in the tone that immediately attracted the other's deeper interest.

"Do you really know him?" she exclaimed. "I wondered, at first, why you were so interested. Where did you get acquainted with him? In Cleveland? I am sure I never met him there. I should have recognized a kindred spirit at once if I had. Is he married?"

The number of questions she was given to answer helped the lady to regain her full self-possession, if that were necessary. "Yes, I met him in Cleveland," she answered. "He attended our church for quite a little while and we became rather intimate. He is a minister, of course. A layman could never defend his faith in that eloquent way. And he is not married. At least I have not heard that he is. Does that interest you particularly?"

"Oh, certainly," the lady answered. There had been a little guile in the question. "But I cannot understand why you did not speak to him if you had been so intimate."

"I simply preferred that he should recognize me first, and be the one to claim an acquaintance."

Her friend looked at her sharply, but she was too late to discover anything of the other's feelings that her words did not reveal. "Would she really marry a minister?" was the thought in her mind. "With her wealth and position in society, I cannot believe it. And yet she would make an ideal minister's wife!"

And they, too, went into the darkness.

Alas, how often Fate brushes us with her wings and goes her way, and we never know that she has been near us!

THE CHRISTIAN LEAGUE.

"No soul unsought ; no child not won."

"Let us help one another to help all."

"The very best destiny for every one."

"Every man our brother, and God the Father of all."

DEAR FRIEND:

"The Christian League" is the name given to a movement as yet unorganized, for promoting Christian zeal and activity, and for extending the Christian influence to every person in each and every community. The definite objects of the League, representing as it does practical Christianity, are as broad as the needs of humanity, and its scope as wide as humanity itself.

The unit of organization in the League is the Neighborhood Club, composed of a few congenial families in each neighborhood and holding friendly relations with all other clubs that may be organized, as many of these clubs as may seem best being represented in a central league. The Neighborhood Club itself will be largely social in its character, although holding fast to all helpful and moral purposes; the League will be largely deliberative and administrative, and through it the larger purposes of the organization may be carried out.

This practical system for extending the Christian influence to every person in each community and carrying to them the benefits of a brotherhood among men, is essentially a Christian work and the church should take the lead in it, but where it neglects to do this there is no reason why any earnest Christian man or woman should not inaugurate the work and obtain what help they can to carry it forward. Even the organization of a single Neighborhood Club will be a nucleus from which the work may be extended until all of the objects of the League shall be accomplished.

The details of this work can largely be left to the judgment of those who engage in it, provided the highest objects of the organization, as suggested in its mottoes, are kept prominently and persistently in view. Let it be determined that the Christian influence and the benefits of a brotherhood among men shall be carried into every home, and the method will not matter so much as the measure of the work.

You are earnestly urged to inaugurate this effective method of Christian evangelization in your community, or to institute measures

that will result in its adoption or the adoption of some equally feasible plan for aggressive Christian work. Amid the signs of marvelous progress in every other line of human effort let it not be said that the Christian people of this century are impotent before these plain problems in Christian ethics, and can find no way of spreading the Christian influence except by dry sermons and aimless prayers.

If you will take the lead in this work and will see that it is carried forward by every means in your power please notify the writer of this, so that a record may be kept of those who are prominently engaged in this special work.

W. H. BISHOP.

The above circular letter will be sent to those wishing to promote the work of the Christian League or of practical Christianity, provided stamps for return postage are enclosed with the request. State how many copies are wanted and whether for local distribution or to be sent away to friends.

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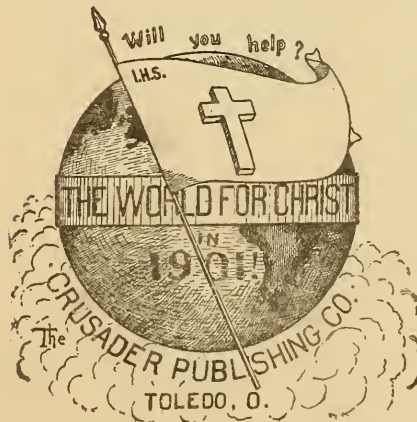
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